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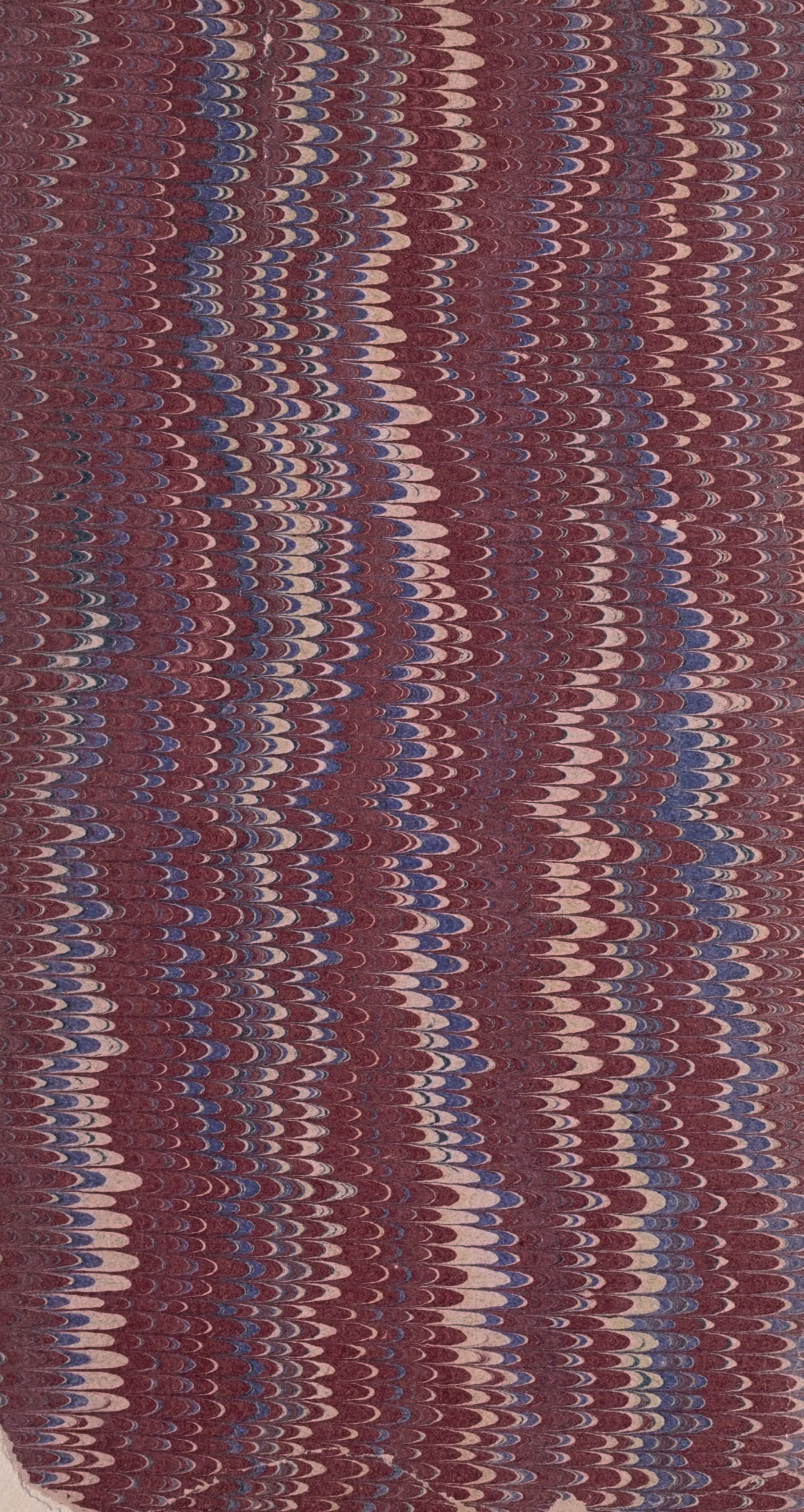
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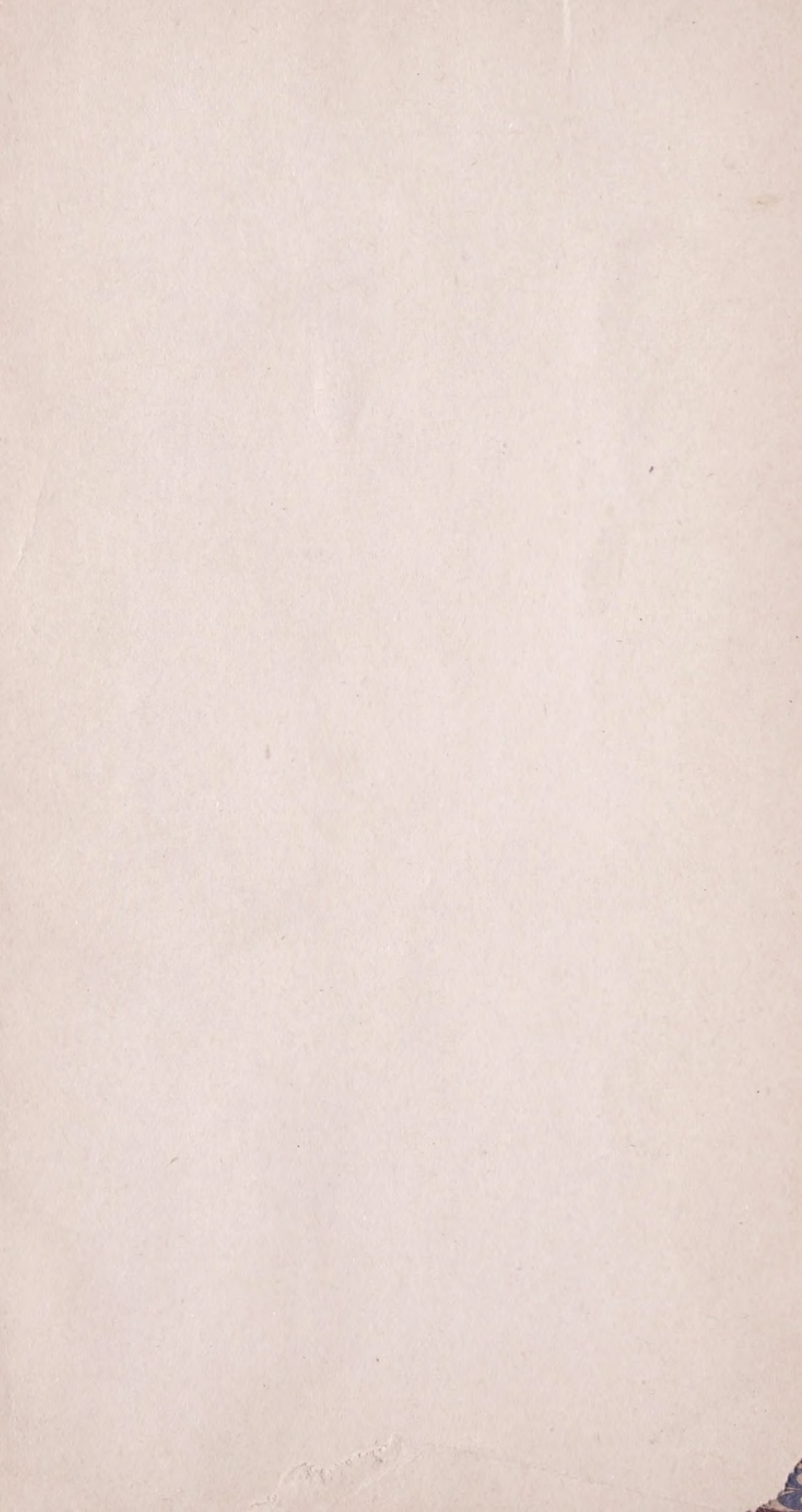
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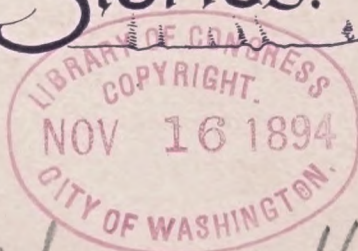
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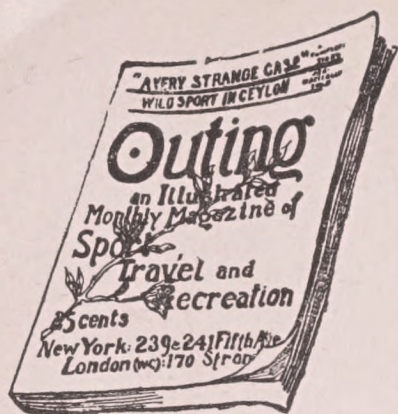
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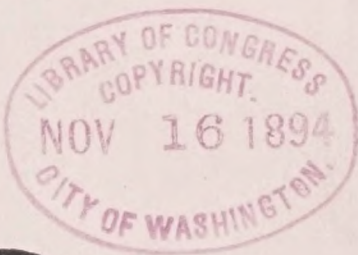
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BY

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OUTING PUBLISHING COMPANY

NEW YORK AND LONDON,

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A COMEDY OF  
COUNTERPLOTS

By EDGAR FAWCETT.



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# A COMEDY OF COUNTERPLOTS.

BY EDGAR FAWCETT.



IN that part of Second Avenue, not far below Fourteenth Street, which of late has become the local prey of shabby boarding-houses and occasional tawdry beer-taverns as well, there stood several years ago the stately old mansion of the Van Twillers. Here one of the sweetest young maids in the whole metropolis had been born and reared. Her name was Lina Van Twiller, shortened from Evangeline, though now, in her nineteenth year, she would sometimes wonder that anything so worthy and flippant as an actual nickname had ever been bestowed upon her by her two austere guardians.

These were a brother and sister of her late father, to whom she had been confided as a very young orphan and heiress longer ago than she could at all clearly recollect. Since that time Mr. Arcularius Van Twiller and his sister, Miss Cornelia, had striven with zeal if not discretion to protect the child of their deceased kinsman. They were both as gaunt and gray as Lina was blooming and blonde. They had made the girl's



life quite loveless and joyless, though mutually convinced that they had blessed her by the fondest and most duteous regard. Once upon a time they had both been youthful themselves (though you would scarcely have suspected it from their present grimness, dryness and sallowness), but now they had wholly forgotten that long-past period. Aging gracelessly and harshly while Lina grew up into girlhood, they had frowned upon all the rapid and marked social changes in the city of their birth as though these were symptoms of decay rather than progress.

Everything and everybody not strictly of Knickerbocker stock they frowned upon, it seemed to poor Lina, as either trivial or wicked. The girl often thought that they would have prevented the occasional visits of her uncle, Mr. Simeon Gansevoort, and his daughter, Rosalie, if such a step had not been one fraught with barbarism ; for Mr. Gansevoort was her mother's only brother, and came, besides, of an early English lineage that these Second Avenue kinsfolk were bound to respect. Thrilling Lina with envy, Rosalie Gansevoort would bring her Parisian bonnets and gowns into the prim, antiquated rooms of the drowsy old house, and send her silvery laughter pealing through the heavy mahogany doorways and along the darkened, slim-banistered halls. Her father would sometimes come with her—a careless, graceful man, with that foreign air which the American gets after years of



residence abroad. He pitied his young niece, just as Rosalie pitied her, and while stroking his long yellow mustache with one white hand, he would often furtively watch her and think how pretty she was, and how like her dead mother, and wonder what on earth he could do to get her out of this damp old hole of a



VAN TWILLER.



house and away from these two wrinkled old dragons, Arcularius and Cornelia.

Of course he could do nothing. Miss Cornelia had a way of staring at his dark-eyed and damask-cheeked daughter as though she considered both her garb and her manners iniquitous, while Van Twiller gave strong signs of sharing these hostile views. His occasional visits both bored and amused Gansevoort. It chanced that one afternoon the latter made bold enough to say :

“Now that Lina has got to be nineteen, she really should take her proper place in society.”

Miss Cornelia and her brother exchanged a swift, meaning glance. Lina and her cousin, Rosalie, were seated at some distance away, conversing in low tones. With a perfunctory and solemn air the hosts of Mr. and Mrs. Gansevoort had received them, here in this large, gloomy drawing-room, not one of whose details of appointment had been altered for at least two decades. Van Twiller gave a harsh little cough, and stroked his sharp, clean-shaven chin sullenly.

“Not at all, Simeon,” he dissented, “Evangeline’s guardian will not permit her to mix among the pell-mell masses of modern New York society.”

“No, indeed!” abetted Miss Cornelia, with crisp emphasis.

Faintly smiling, Gansevoort leaned back in the hard-bottomed little cloth armchair, which he had selected as the most comfortable that the room contained.



"Good heavens, my dear friends!" he murmured, "what if New York *isn't* the same as it was fifty years ago? Must the town stop growing because you want to stay small? Can't we have any Central Park because you once preferred Bowling Green? Must we suppress Fifth Avenue because you were born in Second? I suppose you're both prepared to call the Brooklyn Bridge a crime, eh, and the Riverside Drive an outrage?"

This was good-humoredly said, but it made the brother and sister each draw themselves up with irate stiffness.

"If you forget your old Dutch birth and connections," Miss Cornelia tartly sniffed, "we, Simeon, do *not*!"

"Right, sister," muttered Van Twiller. His hard, small eyes fixed themselves on Gansevoort's bland face and listless figure as he continued: "*We* haven't spent years and years in foreign countries, ignoring our own!"

Gansevoort laughed a mellow laugh. "Better do that, surely," he said, "than live down here out of the world altogether, like two hermit crabs. But in the name of all that is sensible, what are you going to do with Lina? She's worth a clear million if she's worth a dime. You don't mean that, with her good looks and gay spirits, you'll go on dressing her like a dowdy and not letting her see any male creature except the plumber and gas-fitter! It's only human, you know, to think that she should marry *somebody*."



And then Gansevoort, whose sense of humor was nothing if not keen, recalled the celibacy and spinsterhood of his two present auditors, and almost broke into a shout of that buoyant laughter which his best friends relished for its rare, spontaneous outflow. While he was decorously controlling himself he heard the crisp tones of Miss Cornelia to this effect :

"We hope to arrange an excellent marriage for Evangeline ; but not until she is about thirty years of age. We've a good while to consider the matter, Simeon, and that seems to us ample time."

"But during those years," politely suggested Gansevoort, "your charming niece *may* have concluded to make her own selection."

The Van Twillers took no notice of this remark ; perhaps it appealed to them in the light of too piteous a flippancy. Arcularius, following the thread of his sister's avowal for a moment, now answered :

"Yes, Cornelia is quite right. And at this particular period we're concerned with the painting of that portrait mentioned in her father's will."

"Oh, yes, I remember," said Gansevoort, "your brother and my brother-in-law, poor old eccentric Bartholomew ! stipulated that his child should have her portrait painted before she reached the age of twenty."

"A most absurd proviso, too !" grumbled Miss Cornelia.





“IN LOVE! OH, ROSALIE!” (Page 19)



"Oh, entirely!" assented her brother; "and with such a spice of bitterness in it! 'Before the age of twenty,' ran the words of that special paragraph in Bartholomews' will, 'I wish that my child shall have added her portrait executed by the most prominent portrait-painter of her native city, to the several remarkably ugly ones which I bequeath her.' It's to be *hoped* Bartholomew had forgotten, at the time of inserting this clause, that Cornelia's and mine were among the canvasses thus referred to."

These final words were spoken with great sourness, and their general meaning struck Gansevoort as so thoroughly droll that he felt the danger of giving at any moment a sacrilegious roar of laughter. Instead of this, however, he made the effort composedly to ask:

"And pray, have you secured your portrait-painter?"

"Yes," replied Van Twiller. "We've engaged a gentleman who appears to be the reigning metropolitan success in that line. His name is Maturin Meade. Do you know about him?"

"Oh, I've heard," said Gansevoort. "He has the indorsement of Paris where he studied for several years. Everybody says he's done very admirable work. And has Lina given him any sittings yet?"

Meanwhile Lina herself, in low-toned, innocent babble to Rosalie, was declaring: "Oh, Mr. Meade is just *too* lovely! He's dark and tall, with a silky black mustache, and eyes like diamonds!"



"My dear," said Rosalie, "you're in love with your portrait-painter."

"In *love*! Oh, Rosalie!" At this point Lina had crimsoned and was drooping her gaze. Then, in a sudden fit of bashful candor, she went on: "I *must* tell you everything. It's all happened so suddenly. We went to visit him at his studio, you know, and I—I couldn't help liking him ever so much before he'd spoken ten words to us. Then, afterward, he came here to—to make preliminary sketches of me."

"Preliminary sketches!" repeated Rosalie, with her most wordly air. She had seen a good deal of life and fashion for a girl of her age. She was the idol of her patrician but somewhat Bohemian father, had lived abroad with him during most of her motherless childhood, and from her birth till now had been permitted by him to do almost precisely what her capricious nature pleased. Perhaps Gansevoort would never have indulged her as he did if he had not reposed in her the most secure confidence. Only one tendency in her gave him the least uneasiness, and that was her fondness for music and musical people. But this anxiety, as he sometimes gayly conceded, was, after all, a kind of prejudiced "fad." Two of his near feminine relations had had the same musical passion, and they had both married musicians, and married very badly indeed. One was a divorced wife, living on her kin, and one had gone to her grave, declared Rumor, with a broken



heart. More than once Gansevoort had raised a warning forefinger and said to Rosalie in his most earnest way, which certain folk were apt to think even then half jestful: "My dear girl, I shall never oppose your marrying any fellow you really care for, provided he's a gentleman and not cursed with stupid vices. But remember one thing, please, he must *not* be a professional musician, singer, player, music teacher, or anything resembling it. If you *should* fall in love that way, Rose, I'll disinherit you, dear, as sure as you're born. Old Capulet in the play will be a lamb of mercy compared with me!"

But Rosalie, though perhaps the timid and impulsive confession that her cousin had just begun may have reminded her, for certain reasons, of this familiar parental monition, now showed every sign of being solely absorbed by Lina's forthcoming little history. "Preliminary sketches, my dear!" she again repeated. "But that isn't at all the style adopted by portrait-painters. I had my picture done in Paris, you know, by a famous French artist; so I'm conversant with the usual method. Why didn't you sit for him in his studio?"

"Oh, I'm going to," hastened Lina, in her eager semitone. "But he comes here now—he's been four or five times—just to sketch me as well as he can, until his wrist gets well."

"Until his wrist gets well!" echoed Rosalie, with great suddenness and an odd, startled look. "How strange!"



"Why strange?" queried Lina.

"Oh, nothing. Go on."

"He sprained it, or bruised it, or something, only a little while before we first met, and he can't do any really serious work on that account."

"Oh, indeed! Well?"

"And—and so he comes here with his portfolio in the mornings, Rosalie," continued Lina, with her blue eyes sparkling and her color still very tell-tale. "Either uncle or aunt is always in the room—well, not *always*. One or the other *has* left us alone for a few minutes, now and then. And you can't think what those few minutes have meant to us! Oh, Rose, he—he loves me and I love him! He's told me so, and I—I've told *him* so, and I'll never marry anybody else—no, not if they try to make my life even duller and less like other girls' than they've tried for years! I—I don't *want* to *run away*, Rose! That seems so dreadful, doesn't it? But I'm sure that if dear Maturin should tell them of our attachment they'd scowl and scream 'no,' just because he isn't a Knickerbocker and enormously rich. Oh, but they forget I'm of age and my own mistress! I mean to show them *that* pretty plainly when the time comes!"

"And when will the time come, Lina?" asked Rosalie. This access of pluck and resolve, in a spirit usually so yielding, filled her both with admiration and surprise.

"Oh, I don't know, I don't know,"



quavered Lina, more dramatically than as if in fear. "But it can't be far off! Everything depends on *him*. He means to have made up his mind, once and for all, by the next time we meet."

This answer struck Rosalie as certainly a somewhat vague one. She could not then pursue the subject, however; for her father suddenly drew near, calling out in his mellow, indolent voice:

"Rose, you vixen! where are you? It's nearly six o'clock, and we're both engaged to dine out this evening. Come, now—no more love-secrets between you and Lina!"

Just as Miss Cornelia gave an audible gasp at this daring pleasantry, Lina bent toward her cousin and said in swift, faint tones:

"Promise me you'll not breathe all this to a living soul!"

"Of course I promise," Rosalie acquiesced.

The pathetic little tale told by Lina haunted her cousin for more reasons than one. She would in any case have keenly sympathized with her close-guarded young relation; but now Lina's pretty confidences dwelt in her mind, interblended with thoughts regarding the semblance between their two separate fates. "What has put you into such a sober humor?" asked her father, as they strolled up toward Stuyvesant Square in the wintry but sunny weather. And then, as the girl gave some sort of vague reply, he proceeded: "Oh, the



stagnation and somberness of that Van Twiller household are enough to depress a butterfly! Poor little Lina! my heart aches for her."

On reaching the handsome Madison Avenue home where she and her father now dwelt, Rosalie found that she had but scant time to dress for the dinner at which she was soon expected to appear.

With a nervous sigh she gave herself into the hands of an elderly servant, a gray-haired and placid-faced English woman, named Lydia, who had been her nurse ever since she was a child, and who now played the part of her maid-servant, though with a freedom rare in even an adherent so trusted.

"Lydia!" at length exclaimed her young mistress, with unwonted tremors of voice, "I—I hardly feel in spirits to go at all this evening."

"Oh, but you must, Miss Rosalie!" came the solemn and rather curt response. "It's a dinner, you know, and there's no avoiding it at *this* late hour."

Rosalie turned and surveyed the speaker with troubled eyes. "What is the matter with you?" she questioned. "You seem—funny, somehow."

"I don't feel at all funny," returned Lydia, with a solemnity that held volumes of dignity.

"Oh, Lydia!" cried Rosalie, throwing both arms about her old servant's neck, "I'm miserable! And one great reason is because I've—I've been keeping something from you!"

Lydia, who would have died for her



master's only child, and who was in all ways the essence of fidelity, now shook her head with a really repelling air.

"I've known it all along," she said, showing a coldness that her hearer well understood as only a certain phase of affection. "Don't you suppose I haven't noticed, please. And it's about that gentleman with the yellow beard that's been coming here lately in the mornings—in the mornings," continued Lydia, with awful gloom, "when you was dead sure, Miss Rosalie, that your father had gone out and wouldn't be back till lunch-time."

"Yes—that's right," returned Rosalie, drawing her old nurse to a side of the bed, where they both presently sat, while she held one of Lydia's hands between both her own. "It is about Mr. Lorrimore Lynn. He's a great composer, Lydia—or at least a very celebrated one. I mean he makes music; he writes things that are played at concerts."

"And you met him at one of those concerts?" asked Lydia. "I've heard your father say that he wished you didn't care so much for going to 'em. He'd rather you wouldn't be so fond——"

"Of music?—yes, I understand, Lydia. But I shall always adore it. Music is *in* me, and there's no changing a person's taste. But oh, Lydia, it isn't that. It's my horrible conduct. I've been doing what I should despise in any *other* girl, if *she* had done it."

"Mercy!" fell frightenedly from her companion. "What *do* you mean?"





“OH, LYDIA!”

“This, Lydia. Sometime ago I went to an afternoon *musical*—it was at Mrs. Ashburton’s—where I heard a composition played (something they call a sonata, but which I might explain to you forever and not make your dear, stupid old



head any the wiser about it) that delighted me immensely. I kept thinking of it and humming scraps of it to myself for days afterwards, and all the time thinking how I'd like to meet the man who composed it."

"Oh, Miss Rosalie!"

"Hush! you haven't heard anything so terrible *yet*, Lydia! . . . Well I got the sonata, and played it here at home, and liked it more than ever. At the music-shop where I bought it they told me its author, Mr. Lorrimore Lynn, was a young man, and very good-looking. So one day, Lydia, I sat down and wrote him a letter."

"Gracious!"

"Why, *that* wasn't anything much to do! Celebrities like Mr. Lynn receive letters every day from all sorts of people. But I went farther, Lydia. I——"

"Farther!"

"Yes, I—I sent him my photograph along with the letter. It was a *very* cordial letter, and—and it shyly but rather plainly hinted that I'd be at home between eleven and one the next morning; that's the time, you know, when papa's never at home. And horrible as it all was, Lydia, I wouldn't have done it if papa hadn't always so detested the idea of my knowing gentlemen who are musical—young gentlemen, of course. But oh, it's been horribly fast in me!—I admit that."

"Fast!" shivered poor Lydia. "You'd better find some new word. That don't mean half enough."



"Still," Rosalie persisted, with plaintive stubbornness and a forlornly self-defensive look, "I'd have made a clean breast of it all to papa days ago if I hadn't been so afraid he'd part us. For we're engaged, Lydia—yes, actually! He's just as clever as he is handsome, and the most perfectly well-bred person I've ever met. His family are Philadelphians, and he's never cared to go out much in New York, but he could go *anywhere* if he chose."

"I wish he'd go back home!" fumed Lydia.

"Come, now, get me my dinner-gown, or I shall be terribly late for the Armstrongs'," exclaimed Rosalie, rising. "And you mustn't be angry at me, Lydia—you *mustn't*!" With a sudden access of willful hauteur she pursued: "It won't do the slightest good, and if you tell papa you'll only make matters worse. I think you've received my story very coldly, considering that you've known me since I was a baby, and might be *supposed*" (here Rosalie drew herself up with a grand demeanor of rebuke) "to—to sympathize with me in my troubles."

"Oh, I do! I do, Miss Rosalie!" cried Lydia; and then the girl found herself suddenly enfolded in her nurse's arms, patted on the shoulder, called pet names, and even quietly wept over.

Touched to the soul, Rosalie soon said: "It isn't so very bad, after all, is it? You surely don't think I'm a desperate case?"

"Not," trembled the reply of Lydia,



"if you'll tell your father everything, and tell him at once ! Promise me you'll do so ! Promise me, promise me !"

"I'd like immensely to do so," faltered Rosalie. "But, oh, Lydia, how if he should say——"

"Never mind, darling, what you're afraid he might say. Tell him to-night, after you get home. Throw yourself on his mercy—on his love !"

Rosalie started, and while drawing backward, scanned the sweet, plain, faded face. There glowed to her, in that moment, new revelations of an infinite devotion and tenderness.

"I—I believe I will do it," she said, and burst into tears.

But Lydia, instantly drawing forth a handkerchief, began to wipe her young idol's eyes. "Oh, oh, this will never do !" she scolded, though with tones that were the droll opposite of reprimand. "You'll never be fit to dine out if you don't stop crying right straight away !"

A little later Rosalie went to join her fellow-guests at dinner ; and during this same hour, as it chanced, her chosen suitor, sauntering along the upper part of Fifth Avenue, not far from the apartments which he occupied in company with a treasured friend, looked at the crystal-blue sky, in which hung, above the dark housetops, a full winter-moon, pale as a globular fragment of ice, and felt himself preyed upon by the dreariest and most remorseful thoughts.

As the silvery dusk smote his face you could see both its beauty and man-



liness. If it had weak touches of feature these were none the less winsome, and his blonde beard and large, soft eyes gave his appearance an accent both amiable and picturesque.

The evening air had a keen tang of cold in it. But he forgot to note this; he was remembering something that chilled him a great deal more. If his reflections could have been translated into definite language they would have sounded thus :

“One morning, not very long ago, I opened a letter of my friend and fellow-lodger, Lorrimore Lynn, by mistake. I, Maturin Meade, surely a gentleman hitherto, though perhaps a rather inferior portrait-painter, did this. Well, what followed? The letter began ‘My dear sir,’ and I had read but a few lines when I came to the words, ‘your exquisite Twilight Sonata has so captivated me that I play it through at least five times every day.’ At that point something stiff on the reverse side of the page I had perused dropped upon the floor. Already I had seen my mistake, and was full of the most apologetic feeling toward Lorrimore. But the something that had dropped proved to be the photograph of a beautiful young girl. I have seen many beautiful young girls—Heaven knows the world is full of them!—but I had somehow never felt any living one stir me to the soul as did this counterfeit presentment. And soon, moved by what all sinners like myself would term, no doubt, an uncon-



trollable impulse, I gave way to the most absurd jealousy of Lorrimore. Almost before I had realized the full knavery of the act, I had destroyed this letter addressed to him, and determined, while retaining the photograph, to present myself on the following day at the address given by its original. Once having plunged into such a base course of deceit, I found it a fearfully easy one to pursue.... And so the visit was paid next day, and she for whom that picture had been taken proved that it had slandered her actual charms. Shall I ever forget our first meeting, our first talk together! Every minute a confession of the truth trembled upon my tongue, and yet the honesty and candor of her loveliness turned me into a coward. I felt that if I told her I was Maturin Meade, an artist, and that I merely lived in the same suite of apartments with Lorrimore Lynn, composer of her adored *Twilight Sonata*, she would rise indignantly and drive me from her presence with scorn. During that first visit she implored me to play her the *Sonata*; she even plucked me by the sleeve and tried to draw me toward the open piano near at hand. And I, who scarcely know one note from another, what could I do but sink deeper yet in the mire of base deception? I therefore told her (and with how keen a thrill of self-disgust!) that I had recently sprained my left wrist in a way that prevented me from even touching the piano. And a little later came her disclosure con-



cerning her father's prejudice against her knowing musicians. This, I well remember, gave me a kind of comfort. She, too, was dealing in deception, after all.... And so the weeks have been gliding on, and now the end has come. I worship her, and she has sworn to me a hundred times that she will never marry any one but myself. And I—miserable coward that I am!—should at once go to her father and tell him all. And yet—and yet, I dare not! It is not so much dread of Mr. Gansevoort's wrath; it is the thought of her contempt as well. And then the confessional duty which I owe to Lorrimore—that friend of friends! Ah, it's with him that I should begin. And yet—the mortification! If there is one thing he values above all others it is personal honor; and the next is his reputation as a composer. He will never forgive me for having soiled one and tampered with the other. Still, I must speak to him—I must have it all out with him this very night!”

His final determination had not a stimulating effect on Maturin Meade's appetite. He partook of a very delicate and solitary dinner in the café of an hotel not far from his own apartments. When it is chronicled that he quaffed a small bottle of Burgundy, slight other details of his repast need to be mentioned. Quitting the restaurant, he repaired to one of the large and lofty apartment houses which face on Central Park. The steam-heated hall made him utter



a sigh of displeasure ; it was so stifling, so American in its prodigality of high temperature, after the crisp and nipping refreshment of the moonlit air outside ! He asked the neat, alert youth who managed the elevator whether Mr. Lynn had returned yet, and was answered in the negative while they flew up together past the ornate gratings that served as portals to the various landings of the stone-floored, fireproof halls. Presently he entered the suite of rooms which for more than a year past he and Lorrimore Lynn had mutually occupied. His own studio came first, a chamber opulent in choice tapestries, rugs and curios, which he had picked up during a long residence abroad. He glanced, while sinking into an armchair and taking the first puff of a new-lighted cigarette, at his draped easel, where stood a canvas on which he had scarcely been able to paint for many days. Lorrimore, it now occurred to him, had not only done very little playing of late, but had seemed oddly depressed. There, just a step away, was his music-room, with its two pianos, its pretty Louis Quatorze decorations, and its bronze tripod in one corner, holding cards to teas, receptions, dances. Why did Lorrimore pay no heed, nowadays, to these polite social advances ? Assuredly he went nowhere, for had not he himself languidly admitted as much not long ago ? Could it be possible that Lorrimore was also unhappily in love ? If this were true, his own forthcoming



declaration would prove easier by far.

In a few minutes more Lorrimore came quietly into the room. He threw off his overcoat without a word, and lit a cigarette at the glass chimney of the rose-shaded lamp only a few inches from his friend's elbow. His dark face, with its large, wide-apart eyes, dreamy and yet radiant, like those of many music-lovers, wore an anxious and melancholy look. As he glanced over his shoulder at Maturin, their gaze met, and for some reason the contact seemed to embarrass them both. Lorrimore moved toward the fireplace, on whose lustrous andirons lay two or three half-consumed logs, and seizing the poker from a near stand, wrought a ruddy blaze with a few sharp thrusts of it. Then, as if the sound thus made had not served adequately to break the oppressive silence, he half-turned, addressing his companion.

"You've dined, I suppose, Maturin?"

"Yes," came the answer. "Have you?"

"Yes."

More silence. "How," thought Maturin Meade, "shall I tell him of my abominable treachery? I *must* begin—somehow."

Lorrimore Lynn slowly strolled from the fireplace to the big lamp-lit table, beside which his friend was seated.

He opened at random one of the many books that were scattered about it, and while listlessly turning over the leaves of this, heard a voice within his brain,



as it were, commanding, monitory, inflexibly stern. "Open your heart," enjoined the voice, "and confess everything ! It is true that Maturin Meade is the soul of honor, and may never forgive you when he learns that you have dared to assume his name and to pose before Lina Van Twiller and her two old guardians as artist and portrait-painter. It is time you got yourself out of this hateful snarl, and though Maturin values his fame in art beyond anything except his repute as a perfect gentleman, your right course is to commence by first imploring his pardon, and then seeking his counsel."

There happened to be another easy-chair a few paces from that which Maturin occupied. Lorrimore left off fingering the leaves of the book he had opened, and while sending forth a great cloud of cigarette-smoke, sought it and sank within its depths. As he did so a mournful memory crossed him of how often in previous months they two had sat here, side by side in these very chairs, and talked together of their separate artistic dreams, accomplishments, hopes, and their former residence in foreign lands.

"I must speak now," said Lorrimore to himself.

And precisely at the same moment Maturin was saying to his own thoughts :

"Here is my opportunity. I have no further excuse for delay. Come what will, I *must* speak now !"



## II.



S might naturally have occurred in a juncture so odd as the present one, both friends attempted to speak simultaneously.

“I wish to tell you, Maturin——”

“I’ve something to speak about, Lorrimore——”

And then they both paused, staring at one another. Lorrimore, whose temperament was at all times the more impetuous of the two, now leaned across the tufted arm of his chair, and agitatedly pursued :

“What *I* want to say, Maturin, is something that I’m only too afraid—you’ll hate and despise me for when you’ve heard it.”

“Why, Lorry, my boy——”

“Oh, Maturin, I’ve been the sorriest of scoundrels ! One morning last month I—I behaved toward you with the very rankest villainy.”

“Good heavens, Lorrimore !”

“Yes—I can’t call it by any other name ; I conscientiously can’t ! And ever since then I’ve been deceiving you—ah, perhaps you’ll say, when you’ve heard everything, that deceiving is far too weak a word !”

Maturin Meade had flushed to his



forehead and then grown pale again. "This — this," he stammered, "strikes me like some curious dream."

"And well it may strike you so!" cried Lorrimore, totally misunderstanding. "I often fail, myself, to realize that I could be unprincipled enough to assume your name."

"To—assume—my—name?" repeated Maturin, in a strange voice, slowly rising.

"There—you're furious at me already!"

"No, Lorrimore, not furious". . . Maturin dropped back into his chair, with blank consternation on every feature. "I—I beg you to go on. That is all."

And then, with piteous precipitation, Lorrimore obeyed him. He told how Mr. and Miss Van Twiller had appeared in that very room, one morning, and mistaken him for Maturin, whom the servant admitting them had incorrectly stated to be at home. He narrated how it had been on the end of his tongue to correct this mistake, when two forceful agencies of temptation produced their speedy but restrictive effect. The first was Lina Gansevoort's modest, enchanting and unique attractiveness; the second was that too evident relentless and imposing watch-and-ward under which her uncle and aunt held the winsome little damsel at their side.

"If ever there was love at first sight," continued Lorrimore in woebegone yet imploring tones, "I fell a victim to it then! These two old Van Twillers,



Maturin, had never really asked me if I—if I were *you* or not."

"Indeed?" fell from his hearer, neutrally, while he stared at the carpet.

"No; they had taken for granted that I *was* you. The old spinster quite rudely deplored the necessity of having Lina's portrait painted at all, poor girl! and regretted that the measure should be compulsory because forced upon her guardian by a clause in her late father's will. And then the chill, metallic voice of the old celibate uncle chimed in, stating that their young niece's life had always been an extremely quiet one and that both he and her aunt so abominated the new folly and flippancy of metropolitan codes and customs as to feel unwilling that Miss Lina should mingle at all in the rabble of upstarts who now called themselves New York society, until she should reach an age of much greater discretion than that which she had gained at present—say, thirty years, or thereabouts. Thirty years, Maturin—think of it! I looked at the dear girl's face, infantile and yet virginal, with its pink upper lip like a curl in the petal of a tea-rose, its tender mutinies of golden curls at brow and temples, and its blue, silver-tinted eyes, that somehow (absurdly enough, you may decide) made me think of two bars from the Evening Star song in "Tannhäuser." I marked her flexible and graceful figure, which the unmodish garb those two dragons had clothed her with was powerless to hide, and I said to myself that here was



a youthful martyr to the merciless rigors of provincial caste. All this flashed through me, Maturin, in a few brief moments. And meanwhile those meek, magnetic eyes appealed to me with a potency no eloquence of my own could describe. I realized that here was the one woman I could love and be happy with (you recall that we have often talked together of our coming 'fates'?) and I comprehended how hopeless would be the chance of my ever seeing Lina again if I neglected this one hazardous yet feasible means. 'Do it,' the dear eyes seemed to say, and like a rascal, like a madman, like a fool, like anything you may please to call me, I *did* it!"

At this point Maturin rose. He went to the fireplace and leaned over it, with forehead pressed against the mantel and one lifted hand partly concealing his face.

"You did it," his voice came to Lorrimore, behind the screening hand; "and what followed?"

Lorrimore sent a despairing look toward the concealed face. Too palpably, he concluded, Maturin Meade was pierced by horror and disgust. Forgiveness could not be dreamed of. But at least pity might be sought and implored.

"Nothing but anxiety and remorse have followed," Lorrimore now cried. "I go there every other morning, and make believe that I am preparing some devilish nonsense that I call preliminary sketches. I don't know any more about



drawing than—well, than you know about music. But I see Lina, and now and then I snatch a chance to speak with her. The Van Twillers don't catch a glimpse of my portfolio; it's something I've borrowed from you; its blank sheets are scrawled over with the most ridiculous lines. I keep telling them (and, alas, Lina is just as much fooled as either of the two vigilant jailers!) that I have sprained my right wrist, and"—

"Your *right* wrist!" now shot from Maturin, as he thrust a hand into either pocket and quickly moved toward the young composer. "Oh, it was your *right* wrist, then!" he pursued, with a kind of wild treble break in his voice as he paused before his friend. "Mine," he soon resumed, "was my *left* wrist!"

Springing up from his chair, Lorrimore swept the speaker's face with searching scrutiny. He was beset with a fear that his friend had either suddenly got into some sort of hysteric state of anger, or that he had concluded to wrap his reproaches and arraignments in a scorching and inexorable sarcasm. "Maturin," he cried, with tears in his breaking voice, "do you mean that you have no possible pardon for me?"

And then, to his amazement, Maturin threw both arms about his neck.

"Lorrimore, Lorrimore! How extraordinary it all is! We're a pair of rascals! This explains all the odd coolness between us for days past! Come



and stand here with me beside the fire. I'm cold ; I'm shivering with — with — well, if you please, with triumph and satisfaction !” He now dragged Lorrimore Lynn by both hands to the big bearskin rug in front of the hearth. And all this time his amazed hearer had been swiftly assuring himself that his own tidings had wrought the abrupt effect of a dementia no less unforeseen than sorrowful.

When he had dropped Lorrimore's hands and had fronted him, Maturin became much more coherent.

“I can't blame you, Lorrimore — I can't, for I haven't the right !”

“Not the right, Maturin ? What on earth do you mean ? You — you just spoke of triumph and satisfaction. How can you possibly feel either ?”

“How ? For the best of reasons, my friend.”

“Your *friend* ! You still call me that ?”

“I shouldn't presume to — to accuse you.” And here Maturin, with both hands momentarily flung into the air and a smile of blended irony and amusement, added tumultuously :

“Lorrimore, haven't I *told* you that we're—we're a *pair* of rascals ?”

Lorrimore receded a little. It was plain that he now quite doubted the sanity of his associate. “Yes, Maturin, you've told me so, but I”—

“But you thought me out of my head. Ah, so you might well have done. Now, listen” . . .





"THEY GRASPED ONE ANOTHER'S HANDS."



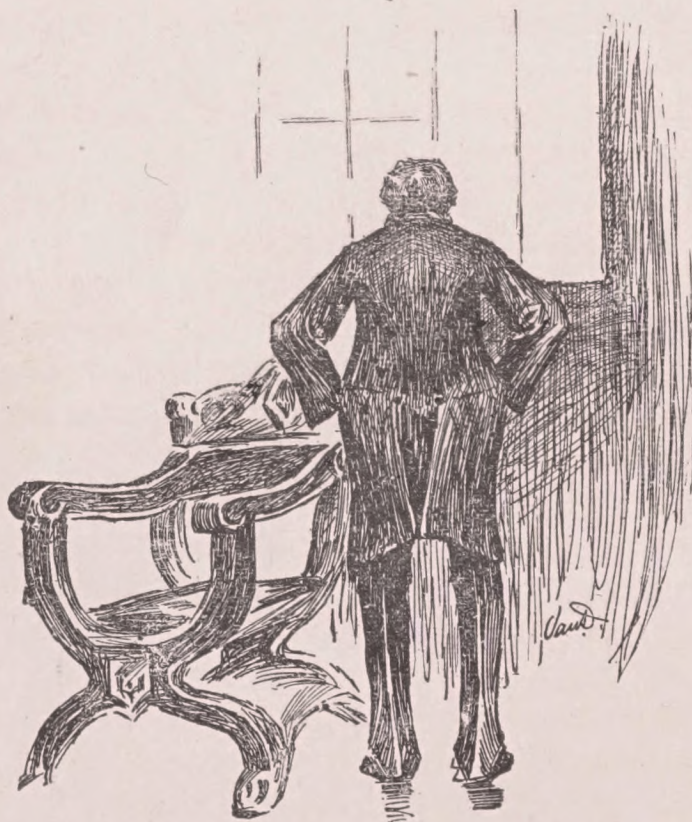
What we know concerning Maturin Meade's course of conduct toward Rosalie Gansevoort, Maturin now made relentlessly plain to Lorrimore.

Lorrimore, dazed into silence at first, finally found a voice.

"Can this be possible? Then we've both betrayed one another? My dear Maturin, isn't it too—too preposterous?"

And then, like a flash, they grasped one another's hands and burst into shouts of strange and feverish mirth . . .

But the more serious side of the question soon occurred to them. For a long time they talked quite gravely together. The folly, the absurdity, and in a way



"THEY COULD ONLY SEE HIS BACK." (Page 47)



even the pathos of the whole situation, with its complexity and yet its almost farcical simplicity, combined to present for them a picture in experience by no means trifling.

"There's no doubt of it," at length said Maturin; "we are both in a horrible muddle! We've behaved idiotically, and our duty is to beg forgiveness of the girls we have so scandalously fooled."

"My dear fellow," muttered Lorrimore, "the Van Twillers will never permit me to marry Lina—never!"

"Then elope with her," said Maturin. "You're not by any means a pauper, and if she'll consent to marry you in that fashion, it will be far better than suffering the anguish of losing her altogether."

"Elope with her!" cried Lorrimore. "Good heavens, my boy, you forget that I'm an impostor as I now stand! She thinks me somebody else."

"True," replied Maturin. "And so does Rosalie think *me*! Oh, the whole condition of things couldn't be much worse than it is! Well, all we can do is to confess the truth."

"And be despised as frauds!"

"I don't know—I don't know," sighed Maturin. "It seems to me that Rosalie will be pitiful when I've told her everything."

"But how about her father?" came the answer from Lorrimore. "Will *he* prove so pitiful, do you think? Or may he not prove most harshly the reverse?"



On the following day, at about eleven in the morning, Mr. Gansevoort paid a visit to these two young gentlemen; or rather, it should be recorded, the father of Rosalie asked for Mr. Lorrimore Lynn, and was received by him. Gansevoort was excessively angry; Rosalie had given him her fullest confidence after coming back home on the previous night. He had presented himself for the purpose of telling Lynn that he desired no further attentions on the part of that individual toward his daughter, and his manner, though stern and cold, was entirely courteous.

"Mr. Lynn," he said, "my daughter has confessed to me her imprudence in seeking to know you, and also the acquaintanceship which has resulted from her foolish step. I must tell you frankly, sir, that I do not wish her to marry a musician. Of course I know the place you hold in the musical world, and merely to hear your name is to understand just who you are. But——"

"Pardon me, Mr. Gansevoort," here broke in Lorrimore, with a pained smile, "but I really must tell *you*, with all possible expedition, that I have never in my life had the pleasure of meeting the young lady to whom you refer."

Simeon Gansevoort, careless and languid man of the world that he was, now gave his yellow mustache an irritated pull.

"What on earth do you mean?" he exclaimed. "Can it be possible that I do not address the gentleman whom my



daughter has been silly enough to seek, to flatter, to admire, and—well, if you please, sir—to fall stupidly in love with?”

At this point Maturin, pale and agitated, swept aside the drapery of the doorway between studio and music-room.

“No, Mr. Gansevoort!” he exclaimed, “I, Maturin Meade, am the suitor of Miss Rosalie! It’s—it’s terrible for me to make this admission, sir, but no other course is left me. I—I feel guilty to the very soles of my feet, Mr. Gansevoort. I—I don’t think any man on earth could be more repentant, either. Perhaps my real name, Maturin Meade, may also be known to you. I’m an artist——”

“And a very admirable one,” Gansevoort coolly struck in. “I chanced to have bought one of your pictures last year, Mr. Meade.” Here the speaker polished a pair of eyeglasses quite leisurely with a handkerchief of much fineness, and then put them on with a good deal of composure, which he somehow contrived to make excessively sarcastic. “I’m a collector of paintings in a small way,” he continued, “and I liked this head of a wood-nymph, signed with your name. It seemed to me cheap at the price, Mr. Meade—but your late conduct is perhaps a good deal cheaper.”

“Ah, sir!” began Maturin——

“Excuse me,” Gansevoort insisted; “if I am not mistaken you have had the insolence to approach my daughter un-



der a false name."

"Under *my* name!" cried Lorrimore, though with a stormy sadness that made Rosalie's father start and stare.

"Really," said Gansevoort, "this is very amazing." He spoke with extreme quietude, and still remained seated. "May I ask for some sort of further explanation?"

"Ah, you're a man of wonderful self-possession!" again exclaimed Lorrimore. "Upon my word, sir, you ought to be frightfully angry."

"I am," said Gansevoort, with a voice of ice.

"But you show it most calmly!" Maturin now almost shouted. "Honor bright, sir, if you threw something at me, or attempted to use that cane of yours upon me, I don't believe I should offer you the faintest resistance."

Gansevoort shrugged his shoulders and crossed his legs. "I'm not a man given to violent measures," he said, still glacially. "Besides, you have received my request for an explanation, and perhaps you will have the goodness to grant it."

"Let *me* explain, sir," burst from Lorrimore; but in an instant Maturin enforced silence upon his friend by a gesture and a look.

"Mr. Gansevoort," the artist then began, "I have simply to tell you a few plain truths, disgraceful, if you will, and to myself unutterably mortifying!"

Maturin now went on, speaking with great earnestness and absolute self-sur-



render. But no sooner had he ended his impetuous narration than Lorrimore commenced another. All this time the placid face of Mr. Simeon Gansevoort was a study of restrained though palpable astonishment. And at last, when Lorrimore had finished, the visitor suddenly rose from his seat and walked toward one of the windows.

Maturin and Lorrimore glanced at each other. What did Mr. Gansevoort's conduct mean? He had concealed his face; they could only see his back, and that trembled as if with some serious perturbation.

"He—he's ill," said Lorrimore to Maturin.

"I—I should say so," came the reply. "Perhaps we've overwhelmed him, as it were, by—by our *two* recitals!"

Both friends had now quitted their chairs, and both were in a state of new and forlorn disturbance.

"Overwhelmed me!" here sounded the half-strangled voice of Gansevoort. He turned, a little giddily and staggeringly, and then the truth burst upon his observers. He was convulsed with uncontrollable laughter. He flung himself into an easy-chair while his two hosts watched him, and then, for quite a good while, they had the chance of noting what real mirth means when it bubbles up, forceful and irresistible, in the soul of a man whose sense of humor is keen and strong.

"You've called yourselves a pair of rascals," at length broke from Ganse-



voort. "Ah, if I were uncivil enough, my two dear young fellows, I should call you a pair of geese!"

"Geese, sir!" said Maturin, biting his lips and paling a little.

"Geese!" echoed Lorrimore.

"Oh, well, donkeys, then, if you prefer it!" cried Gansevoort; but he was too much of a gentleman not to regret those last words and promptly to apologize for them.

This he did while holding Maturin Meade's hand in his own. "My Rosalie ought to have been ashamed of herself," he stated, "for having sent you that photograph. Candidly, I think the girl is dying of shame, as it is. Well, you're a brilliant artist, and if it's true that you love my daughter——"

"Love her, sir!" exclaimed Maturin. "I adore her!"

"Do you, indeed?" said Gansevoort, with his facial muscles yet in a visible quiver. "We'll see, we'll see. . . . I don't say I forgive you yet, but perhaps I may later on. You've one immense point in your favor: you're not a musician; you're an artist, and a good one, as I happen to be aware."

"Oh, thanks, thanks!" answered Maturin, almost with tears in his eyes. "I feel sure now that you do mean to forgive me—that you will permit me, as . . . *myself*, sir, to begin my courtship all over again!"

Gansevoort pursed his lips and shook his head. "My permission, Mr. Meade, will not count for much, I fear. If you





"OH, LINA ! I'VE COME TO TELL YOU." (Page 52)

imagine that Rosalie is going to extend you her pardon easily, I should judge you were making a very grievous mistake."



And Maturin certainly did so discover. No sooner had Rosalie Gansevoort learned the truth from her indulgent and genial father than she flamed up with fiercest indignation.

"Papa," she cried, "do you actually mean that he's—he's an impostor?"

"That's decidedly how it looks."

Rosalie burst into fiery tears. "I will never marry him—never!" she avowed. That night she received a long letter from Maturin, full of passionate entreaties for her pardon. She read it, cried over it, and inclosing it in a new envelope, redirected it to the writer. "You are an artist and quite ignorant of music, my father tells me," she scrawled on a card which went with the returned note. "Your *art* I certainly have excellent reason to admire. Perhaps if you had more music in your soul you'd scorn to treat me as you have done."

She told her father, a little later, just what course she had taken. He watched her in silence for a while, and she perceived that his eyes were full of a brooding and subtle pity.

"So, you've broken with the young man forever?" he asked.

"Yes, yes!" Rosalie tried to say very harshly. And then she added, with a rebuking fall in her voice: "I should think, papa, that you would be very glad."

"And why, pray?"

"Oh, my conduct in making that advance to him! It seems to me that you've not scolded half enough for it!"



"My dear girl, when you first told me of it I shuddered with horror, and afterward, if you'll remember, I gave you a terrific scolding."

"No, no!" contradicted the girl, gnawing her lips. "You behaved, when all is said, papa, with the faultiest sort of leniency."

"My dear Rose," returned her father, leaning backward in his chair, "is it your meaning that I should have soundly boxed your ears?"

"Oh, yes, yes!—anything!" she retorted, with wild petulance.

"But you forget, my dear, that you're a girl. And, then, I *had* been severe in past days on that potential musical suitor. I had no right, child, to hold him over your head as such a bugbear.

Rosalie stamped her foot. "Upon my word, papa, I believe you'd dislike him for my suitor just as much as you ever did if he hadn't turned out to be an artist of whose work you're fond."

"There's a great deal in that, dear," said Gansevoort, with his provoking composure.

"But you *mustn't* like him!" she persisted. "You must despise him, as I do. I shall insist."

Her father laughed. "You've always been wanting the moon ever since you were in short frocks, and I've always been trying to get it for you. The only thing I've ever denied you, if I'm not mistaken, has been a musician for a husband."

"Oh, I don't want one!" flared the



girl. "You needn't have the faintest misgivings *there!*"

"No; perhaps you'll prefer an artist."

"Oh, papa! papa! you're beyond all patience!"

"My dear Rose, it *may* be that *you* have not patience enough."

Rosalie tossed her head in great wrath. "Mercy! how *you* appear to have fallen in love with this precious charlatan!"

"Really, I think him a very nice fellow. He is doing finely with his painting, and has the advantage of being a gentleman——"

"A *gentleman!* Oh, papa! I shan't speak another word on the subject!" And Rosalie swept out of the room in a grand rage.

The next day she went to see her cousin Lina, down in Second Avenue. Mr. Van Twiller, as it chanced, was upstairs with a severe though not dangerous lumbago, and Miss Cornelia was not at home. As the two girls met, a kind of telegraphic flash seemed to take place between them.

"Oh, Lina!" said Rosalie, "I've come to tell you——"

"That my Maturin Meade is your Lorrimore Lynn! Oh, Rosalie, *isn't* it the *very* strangest thing that has ever happened in the whole world?"

"Strangest?" said Rosalie, with scorn. "Call it the most villainous!"

Lina's blue-sparkling eyes turned sad. "That's a very hard way of putting it!"

"Not at all! You may have what opinions you please about your bogus artist, but my bogus composer has



grown simply detestable to me!"

Lina gave a mournful little cry. "Oh, don't say that! Maturin—I mean Lorrimore Lynn, you know—has just sent me such a long and lovely letter! He managed to get it into my maid's hand and she conveyed it to me without the knowledge of either Uncle Arcularius or Aunt Cornelia. It was so pathetic!"

"Pathetic!" sneered Rosalie.

"He told the entire story about himself and his friend."

"Really, my dear? And you have forgiven such gross chicanery?"

"Chicanery? Oh, Rosalie, they—they could neither of them help it! They—they were led on by—by something they couldn't resist. I *know* that Matu—I mean Lorrimore (it does seem *very* strange to call him by this new name!) was tempted only through his great love for me. I cried over his letter, and pardoned him almost before I'd ceased to feel amazed at it. You should do the same thing, Rosalie!" And here Lina drew forth a bulky envelope from a pocket in her gown. "Let me tell you what he says about the way in which your photograph affected his friend." After rapidly opening her letter, Lina shot a sudden look of reproach at her cousin across its unfolded pages. "But I *must* tell you one *other* thing *first*," she now announced in a changed and queerly solemn voice: "Your sending your picture, like that, was——"

"A brazen, outrageous piece of business!" broke in Rosalie, with unrelent-



ing self-scorn. "Oh, I grant it, Lina—I ought to be flayed alive for doing what I did! But that does not excuse *him*, you know. And I'm very sorry to find you so thoroughly romantic a little goose. Of course you should never speak to—to the real Lorrimore Lynn again. I *never* intend to speak again to the real Maturin Meade!"

But Rosalie's intention, as it soon turned out, faded before that energy of circumstance of which her good-natured father soon chose to make himself the agent. Gansevoort had taken a great fancy to the repentant young artist; though, after all, he did not prove himself at all foolishly hasty in bringing about a meeting and a reconciliation between his daughter and Maturin Meade. He possessed a kind of clair-voyant knowledge of Rosalie's heart, born of his excessive love for her and the easy, brother-and-sister terms of intimacy on which they two had long lived. He had no doubt that the girl hid a deep and womanly love behind her indignation and chagrin. Then came his earnest desire, actively carried out, to discover if in any way this match would prove an unsuitable one for his child. Finding that not only was there no real stain upon the character of Maturin, but that his genius for painting was coupled with an excellent social status, not to speak of the handsome income derived from his numerous portraits and pictures, Gansevoort assumed the rôle of a genial fate, and in less than



a fortnight began to beam with all his habitual complacency upon a troth-plight about as happy as he had ever witnessed between two kindred souls.

Rosalie had forgiven, and gained perhaps the sweetest guerdon such clemency can ever bestow. But with poor Lina it was all quite different. She, who had been so willing to forgive, now dwelt in the chill gloom of her aunt's and uncle's unpitying frowns. Following Gansevoort's advice, Lina and Lorrimore had striven to melt these two stony old custodians into concession; but their attempt was met with only derision and disgust. "I will go and see them," said Gansevoort, in his gentle voice; and he went.

He found them in a most embittered state. Lina came into the room and kissed him and pressed his hand, at the very moment her uncle Arcularius was saying—

"It really seems too bad that in a case like this people in our position can't protect themselves by the police."

"You mean," replied Gansevoort, "that you consider it illegal for Lina and Lorrimore Lynn to love one another?"

Miss Cornelia bridled at this even more than did her brother. "You should be very well aware, Simeon," she said, "that by such a sentence, delivered in the hearing of our niece, you inflict upon both of us a severe annoyance. But, then, you have too evidently come here to make trouble."



"I will make trouble, if you insist upon it," said Gansevoort, rising. "You and Arcularius have neither of you the least control over Lina, who is now of age and her own mistress. Kindly recollect, too, that I am as close a relation of hers as you are ; consequently, I feel myself authorized to advise her, and I do so after mature reflection. My advice is this : that she shall marry the man of her choice, in spite of your august vetoes."

"In *spite* of them !" wailed Miss Cornelia.

"*Marry* the mountebank !" rang from her brother.

"Oh, Uncle Simeon !" cried Lina, springing toward him. "I'll obey *you* ! I'll even leave the house with you this very day ! I'm sick to the soul of trying to move those two cold hearts ! If, as you say, and as I well know, I'm now my own mistress, then from this hour I'll defy a guardianship I was once grateful for, but which has grown to me a wretched yoke and burden !"

She flashed upon the two Van Twillers a look of defiance that made them exchange a glance of savage resolve. But they felt, nevertheless, that their tyranny had ended. Yielding with the worst grace in the world, they still were forced to yield ; and, later, though they sanctioned the betrothal with ill-concealed pangs of aversion, they sanctioned it, notwithstanding.

And so these two cousins each won the husband of her preference, even if



by a course of true love that ran with the oddest and most twisted of currents. And, however blamable and unprecedented the method of courtship adopted by Maturin and Lorrimore may seem to us, one fact can safely be recorded of both—a fact redounding to their credit and also breathing of their deserved exculpation—they have each, for several years past, made the best and fondest of husbands. It may be as true of all of us, as of them, that we weave a very tangled web indeed “when first we practice to deceive;” but now and then the hand of destiny itself (as in the instance just chronicled) doth seem kindly to fall, with an unraveling and order-bringing kindliness, upon the turmoil wrought by our most foolish acts.





# PASTELLE.

BY CLARA SPRAGUE ROSS.

## CHAPTER I.



THE hottest day of the season was over. The sun, a huge crimson ball, had dropped unwillingly below the horizon. Twilight came with a faint, trembling breath ; a few soft, fleecy clouds passed out with the vanishing murkiness and left the night brilliant and beautiful. A fair, young moon, shyly creeping in and out of the frail cloudlets, hung in the burning atmosphere, but night brought neither respite nor relief. The crickets in the grass kept up their sad monotone ; the insect life that had reveled in the glare of the midday sun still rent the air with hissing, stinging cries ; the weary birds, hiding beneath the hot and dusty leaves, twittered fretfully or made petulant bird-remonstrance to each other.

At the large hotel on the hill, at the right of "Buxton's," the panting orchestra were playing the last bars of an enticing waltz. From my window at "Buxton's" I watched the hitherto gay, young devotees of the dance come slowly up from their sail on the still, dark



waters of the lake that gave to this lovely Adirondack retreat its name. One by one the lights were extinguished in the immense hotel, and the moon and the crickets were alone.

Too much exhausted with the heat to sleep, impatient of the four bare, white walls that imprisoned me, I took a soft lace scarf from my dresser, carefully descended the creaking stairs, silently drew the clumsy bolt that protected "Buxton's" from the world, and stepped out on the broad, rough piazza that ran around three sides of the old farmhouse. A large, old-fashioned rocker, with broad arms, stood in one corner of the piazza, and, sure of the solitude, I threw myself into its shelter. With a start, and a little cry of astonishment, I fell back against the piazza railing. Just before me sat Miss Harriet Buxton; one hand supported her bowed head, the other slowly waved back and forth a tattered palmleaf fan. She drew herself up at the sound of my startled cry, and, turning her dark, homely face toward me, said: "I'm sorry I scairt ye, Mrs. Manning; will ye have this chair?"

"Forgive me for intruding upon your quiet, Miss Harriet; you must be very tired to-night," I answered, seating myself near her on a cane sewing-chair.

"Yes, I am tired, dead tired o' thinkin'. I don't do nothin' that tires me like thinkin', and I've done sights of it," was the sorrowful reply.

I glanced at the hard, knotted, scarred hands that were now folded in Miss



Harriet's lap, thinking of the never-ending toil to which they bore unquestioned witness. I knew so well how many, many summers this tall, frail woman had carried the old inn, familiarly called "Buxton's," through the drudgery of its short season. Always patient, always filled with anxiety lest her guests should suffer the smallest inconvenience; making good Miss Susan's unfortunate derelictions and Sarah Buxton's miserable blunders.

I was conscious of the struggle, of the pain, the weariness, but I had only thought of these as physical; I had left out of the problem she was working the wearing, mental strain, the agonizing mind of this poor mountain drudge.

I was full of pity; I longed to offer sympathy, to give expression to the rushing thoughts of my own mind, or to ask her to share with me the anxiety that weighed so heavily on her's; but I sat mute at her side. I dared not try to penetrate the unconscious dignity in which the woman wrapped herself after that one sad cry. The reserve, the loneliness of a lifetime were not to be rudely thrust aside, that a stranger from another, brighter, happier world than hers, might gaze curiously at a struggling, quivering heart.

A gentle breeze from the lake, hidden in the pines and balsams just below us, lightly swayed the leaves of the creeper that twisted itself about the weather-stained piazza; a slender, purplish cloud trailed slowly across the moon. Leaning



over until I could look up into her face, I laid a hand upon the one with which she clasped the arm of her chair, and said softly: "You are a marvel of strength and endurance, Miss Harriet; but these have their limit with the best of us; you need rest, and more than rest, change." The shadow of a smile hovered about her fine, firm mouth, but she did not withdraw her hand as she answered, a little bitterly: "You're as good as the doctors, Mrs. Manning, for prescribin' remedies that only the dear Lord knows how we shall get. I have never been further from home than over to John Brown's grave in forty years; the only change I'm likely to have will be upward, not outward." Then, as if fearing she had spoken harshly, she added, "but it's kind of you to care, and it ain't the work, nor the mountains, nor 'Buxton's' that's so hard to live with; it's the worry as I told you; and yet I've found a way out of lots of worries. There's Stannardses, up on the hill; I fretted from the time they turned the first sod till the Leigh-ton and the Crafts and President Powers, and all of the rest of our reg'lars drove up *here* by the first stage the next year, 'bout the way we girls was goin' to be pushed further and further along till there wouldn't be nothin' for us to do but to drop into that black, treacherous lake yonder.

"The mortgage on the farm's been paid since then, and a bit laid by for Sarah and Susan; not much, though.



Nobody but Sarah could make both ends of it meet, but she'll do it, and take care of Susan, too; them twin girls set sights by each other, and the same Providence that's cared for three old maids can care for two; but—but—"she hesitated, struggling to repress the quivering of her lips and to crush back the strong emotion that threatened to overwhelm her—"but what'll become o' Pastelle, my pretty little Pastelle? Can ye tell me that?" she pleaded.

How far apart we were, after all! Only this pained cry, with the pathos in the word Pastelle, could have convinced me that the wild, shy, careless child was the Koh-i-noor with which Miss Harriet could not part. "Her sisters—Sarah surely will care for her," I suggested.

"No, no," she answered, hastily, "you don't know Sarah. Where she loves she'll do anything; where she hates she can't see no good. She never could bear Pastelle, never since she laid soft and white and helpless in the old cradle that all the Buxtons have been rocked in for four generations.

"I think it broke her heart when father married the second time; Sarah'd been his favorite always, and I thought she'd die when I told her the truth. You see Mrs. Manning, it all came about like this: father had lived alone ever since mother died. We girls weren't like him. Father was a gentleman, and he hadn't always lived up here in the mountains. 'Twasn't half



so strange he married Pastelle's mother as that he had married ours. He loved his books and his dogs and the sunsets and the scenery. He never talked much, and was gloomy and lonesome-like when the season was over and the guests was gone.

"One summer there came up a family from New York—father, mother and five children—ugly, whining, fretful children they was, too—and a girl about sixteen, Pastelle. She was a poor cousin; her aunt gave her a home and expected her to look after the children. The girl was a delicate, quiet thing, and those youngsters made her life miserable. She told them stories, she rowed them on the lake, or she took long tramps *into* the woods with them, never cross or complainin', but growin' every day more pale and thin and tired-like. After a few weeks she began to cough, just a little low cough, as if she didn't know she was coughin'. I couldn't but feel sorry for her.

"By and by her aunt said she shouldn't stay in this lonesome place any longer. There was nothin' here then but 'Buxton's,' and they packed their trunks to go the next day. Father says to me that mornin', 'Harriet, we'll keep that poor child another month, if her aunt is willin'; you may ask her.' Well, the aunt didn't seem to care whether she went or stayed, and the girl looked so grateful-like when I put my arm around her and gave her father's invitation that I couldn't help bein' glad, tho' I knew



what was comin'.

"When the month was over father wrote her friends that he and Pastelle were going to be married. They never answered the letter.

"We might have been very happy that winter but for Sarah. Father seemed to think more of Susan and me because Pastelle loved us, and her pretty, girlish ways made us her willin' slaves. She found an old violin somewhere in the house, and evenin's she'd play to us, a sad, tearful sort of music, that would have broken a heart of flint, I used to think. She grew rosy, and the hollows filled up in her cheeks, and she didn't cough so much—but she couldn't win Sarah, and she knew it; and tho' father wouldn't have borne any real unkindness to his wife, he never seemed quite to forget his old fondness for Sarah, and he didn't interfere. Her jealousy rather pleased him I fancy.

"Well, the next summer season was an awful hard one; the house was full, and father was more careless than ever. He would take Pastelle and go off every mornin' across the further lake, and into the woods, leavin' everythin' for us girls to do.

"I was half sick that year, too, and we couldn't have carried 'Buxton's' through but for Sarah; the angrier she got with father, the harder she worked, and we did splendidly.

"I was glad, tho', when it was all over, and we were quiet again. Susan and I made lots of plans for the long, dreary



winter days that was comin', and Pastelle would laugh and tell us how good she thought we was, and how much she loved us.

"Late in October we were havin' almost summer weather. That fall a party of young men drove over here for a week's huntin'; they made father promise to go with them as guide. He didn't want to go, and at first he refused, but Pastelle joined with the young men, and they offered so much



"LOOKING UP THE WAY THEY WAS TO COME." (Page 66)



for his services that he consented, though I could see he did it reluctantly, and only because Pastelle wanted him to.

"She was awful restless as soon as he was gone. I couldn't seem to do anythin' to make her happy; she would start at every little noise, and her face had a scared, white look all the time. Sarah'd smile kind o' scornful and say she guessed she'd live through it.

"We didn't expect them back until Saturday night, for the young men was to spend Sunday here; but early Friday mornin' Pastelle drew a chair towards the window, lookin' up the way they was to come, and folded her arms on the sill, with her head restin' on them, and her great gray eyes fixed on the mountains. All at once I saw her start, and, lookin' over her head, I could see one of the young men runnin' down the little foot-path and motionin' to me somethin' I couldn't understand. I hurried to the door, but Pastelle got there first, and she heard him say, 'Take her away, Miss Harriet! take her away!' Swift as a deer she rushed past him, and over the ground down to the lake. She was the first to know and see it all.

"One of the party had slipped on the wet grass that mornin' and fallen; his gun had discharged, and father, who was walkin' just before him, dropped lifeless at his side without a cry.

"They told me afterward they thought their feet was rooted to the



earth when they saw Pastelle flyin' down to meet them. She didn't make a sound or ask a question; she only raised one of father's hands from his breast, and, claspin' it in her own little hand, walked slowly and calmly beside the men who bore the quiet form she loved so dearly.

"I can't tell you of the next few days, Mrs. Manning—you know it ain't easy to talk about the things that wring the life-blood out of your heart—they were terrible days, though, with Sarah cryin' and sobbin' all day and all night beside the coffin, and Pastelle cold, and white, and dumb, stealin' in and out of the room, just to look at father, or to put his hair back and touch his forehead with her colorless lips.

"They came to an end at last, as I've found everythin', good or bad, does come, and we four were left alone in the old house; but the winter Susan and I had looked forward to was the dreariest, darkest one of our lives.

"I think if Pastelle had been wild and fierce in her madness it would have been easier, but she just sat there by that window day after day, lookin' and watchin,' and never speakin' one word.

"We got the doctor to come over from Evanstown to see her. He said there was nothin' to do but wait; she'd come out all right by-and-by. We must let her have her own way and watch her carefully.

"One day in March, Pastelle, just a little whiter and quieter, lay in there



where father had rested, and I sat, helpless and alone, watchin' the bit of a baby girl she had put into my arms.

"The soft, lovin' look had come back into her eyes at the last, and she spoke just once when she gave me the baby : 'She is yours, Harriet ; her name is Pastelle, to please her father, you know.' Then she just folded her hands and sighed, and Susan pressed the lids down over the tired eyes that would never need to watch any more.

"It is fifteen years since then, Mrs. Manning ; long, hard years they was at first. Pastelle was delicate and feeble-like, and I didn't know the least bit how to do for her, but I loved her as I'd never loved Sarah, or Susan, or father, and I prayed every day to God to let me have her to love and live for. She was like her mother from the first, so quiet and patient and mournful-like ; but she had father's eyes, large and dark, like deep, purple pansies you see sometimes, only, as she grew older, the startled, hunted look came into them more and more. Susan said they made her think of a wounded fawn ; but I knew it was her mother's trouble."

The white light of the moon was full on Miss Harriet's face ; she lifted the palm-leaf fan as if to shield herself. I saw her lips close tightly, and the lines about her mouth deepened into wrinkles.

"I've often wondered," she continued, after a moment, "why the things that cost the most, that you sacrifice



everythin' else for, are never quite what you hoped they'd be ; there's always somethin' that takes the joy out o' them soon or late. Did you ever think of it, Mrs. Manning?"

"Ah! dear Miss Harriet, it is a sad experience, and one not confined to the mountains," I whispered. She did not need to tell me of the bitterest drop in her cup. I divined, however, that tonight it would ease her heart to empty it of the whole burden, and I glanced at her questioningly.

"I wouldn't believe it at first," she went on, turning her face from me just a little, "that I should never hear her childish voice. I knew she could hear the birds sing, and she'd sit, solemn as an owl, lookin' up at the clock, listenin' to its tickin'. Why shouldn't she talk? The summer she was three years old there was a famous doctor here with a party of friends. One of the ladies, who took a fancy to Pastelle, asked him what could be done for her, but he didn't say much. He thought as she grew older and stronger she'd try to talk. It was because she was so frail and had been sick a good deal that she was backward, and he asked if she couldn't be taken on a sea-voyage ; she needed warmth and sunshine all the year round. He said this mountain air was enough to congeal stouter frames than Pastelle's. He didn't like it up here anyway, and hurried off in a few days. Well, I tried to hope a while longer. As she grew older she seemed stronger. She could climb



like a cat; she learned to row and to swim, and was never so happy as when she was wanderin' about in the woods across the lake. It used to worry me most to death if she was out of my sight, till she had the dogs. You know Albert Leighton sent her his two hounds, Carver Doone and Kaiser Fritz, when he went abroad, and Annie Leighton gave her a little silver whistle to wear with a silver chain around her neck, and, little by little, I've got used to her bein' away all day, especially in the summer-time, when I'm so busy. I've made up my mind to the worst now, and the cross doesn't bind half so hard when you've settled it down on your shoulders for life, an' you try to suit yourself to it, instead of lookin' every mornin' to see if it ain't gone, and you can straighten up. I can't help thinkin' though, about the future; nobody else can feel towards her as I do, an' we're poor, an' I'm gettin' old. We grow old faster up here in the mountains, where there's nuthin' fur us to think of most of the year but ourselves and our loneliness and our pains. It's been awful selfish for me to try to thrust my care on you, though, and almost a stranger, too. Don't you think you can forget it all? We'll never speak of it again, but I shall always remember how kind and patient you was to listen."

"Miss Harriet," I interrupted, "I am very sure I was sent down here to-night to listen. I do not wish to forget one word of your sad story. Do you know



the boy whose coming I anticipate to-morrow is not my son, but the child of one who was once very dear to me? We have the same name, and he has been mine from his boyhood. I love him as you love Pastelle. If I can comfort or help you, let me do it for the sake of this tender affection that makes heart answer to heart."

For a moment we sat with hand clasping hand in the darkness; the sky was gray with gathering clouds; little gusts of wind, laden with fine, warm rain, swept over our faces. Carver and Kaiser, who were crouching beside the house-door, whined piteously as Miss Harriet held it open and I went in.





## II.

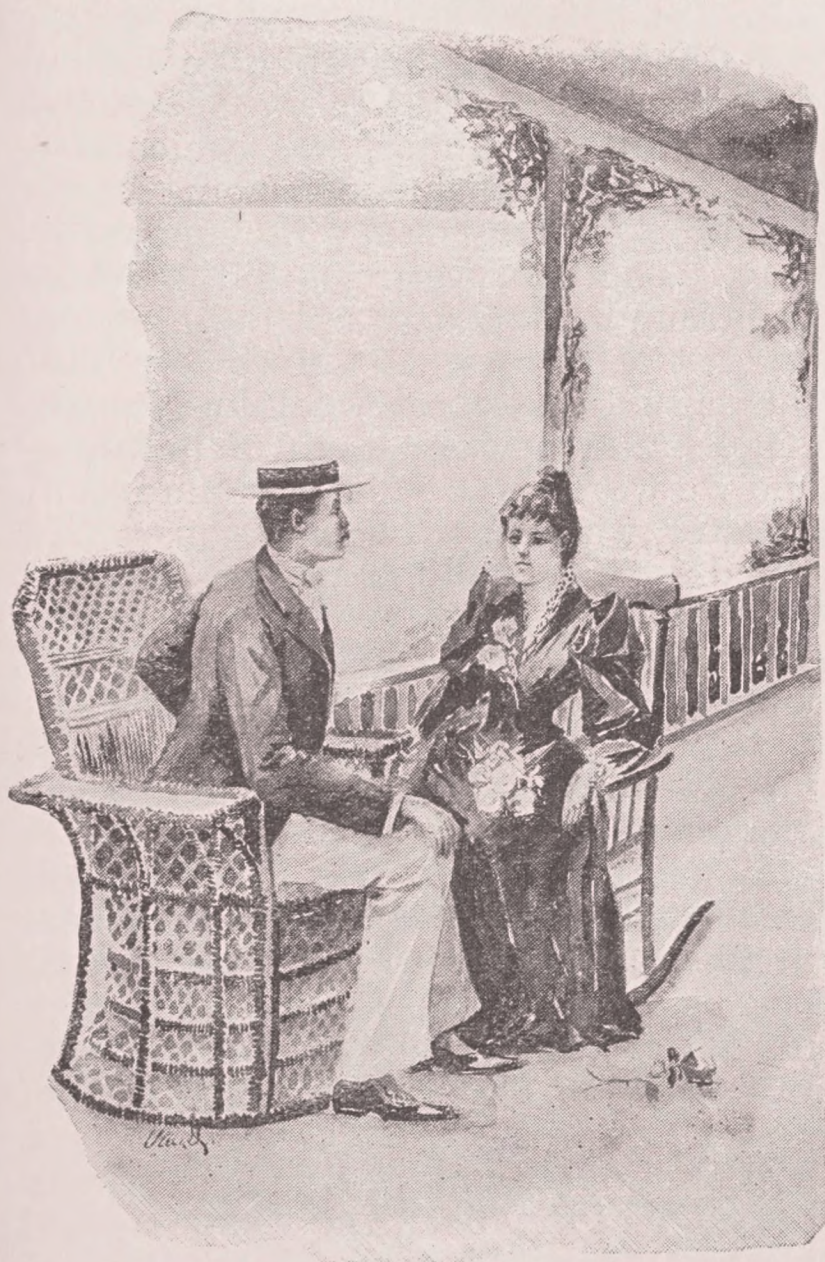
THE next day the heavy, jolting stage, with its weary, lagging horses, which should have reached "Buxton's" at eleven in the morning, was two hours behind time, and the Leightons, of whose party I was a member, were sitting on the hot piazza, after a hurried dinner, in a fever of expectation and needless anxiety. Annie Leighton, sweet and fair as the creamy roses she wore in drooping profusion at her slender waist, raised her opera-glass for the fiftieth time to search the dusty road stretching out over the meadows and down to the little wood, where it passed out of sight. Her delicate face flushed softly as I joined the group. She looked at me mockingly, saying, "How can you be so calm, Mrs. Manning, when you haven't seen Harry for three years? And there's mamma, too, fanning herself as placidly as if Albert Leighton were not almost in sight!"

We smiled indulgently at the impatient girl, while her mother answered lovingly, "It is a lesson Mrs. Manning and I have learned, dear. There is so much waiting to be done, it is easier to do it without fretfulness."

Ten minutes later the glass fell with a crash, and Annie went flying down the steps with outstretched arms to be clasped to the heart of her brother, who sprang lightly from the coach, lift-



ing his eyes as he did so to the eager, tearful face that watched him from the piazza. With a quickly beating heart I waited for the tall, manly figure of my own dear one. His greeting lacked nothing of warmth or spontaneousness, and I knew his old-time boyish affection



WE DREW OUR CHAIRS INTO THE MOONLIGHT.



for me had not suffered loss in these years of separation. The rich color mounted to his fine, dark face just as it had done when as a boy he was very much pleased, and he held my hands in both his own, exclaiming, "Just the same blessed Cousin Dorothy as ever, aren't you, dear?"

Without waiting for reply, he led me over to Mrs. Leighton, who, in her quiet, cordial manner, was welcoming the young Englishman whom Albert had brought with him quite unexpectedly. The other guests of the house had found the heat and light of the August afternoon so oppressive that the daily diversion of watching for the stage had not tempted them to linger, and we were alone in our happiness.

Later, when the dazzling sunset had faded into a soft, gray twilight, we went boating and were drifting slowly about on the motionless waters of the large lake. Albert, with his arm around his mother, was softly whispering of hopes and anticipations that she alone could truly share. Young Horace Hendon sat beside me in the small cushioned seat in the stern of the boat in an ecstasy of delight over the mountains and the water, while Harry, with his hands resting slightly on the oars, watched the shy, love-lighted face of Annie Leighton, who sat opposite him. Through her fingers, hanging idly over the edge of the boat, the water rippled softly. Over the tops of the trees a crescent moon lighted the sullen lake



with a trail of glittering splendor. It was, indeed, a pretty picture and a happy party. "Will you sing for us, Harry?" broke in Annie, suddenly. "Something sad and sweet, please; let us drift to the land of the 'lotus-eaters' to-night, guided by the moonlight and lulled by dreamy music."

"How recently has my little sister developed this fondness for lotus-eating, and moonlight, and music?" asked Albert with a laugh that brought wave after wave of color to the girl's face.

Harry's fine, well modulated voice rang sweetly out on the quiet night, now tenderly, almost sadly, then with the gay and joyous abandon of a French serenade, closing with an impassioned "Adieu! Adieu!"

Harry brought the boat to its moorings at the little wooden pier that ran from the boat-house to the water. One by one we followed each other in the narrow dewy path through the grass, in silence to the house.

A promenade concert and dancing at the "Stannard House," on the hill, had attracted the remaining guests at "Buxton's," and we found the broad piazza lonely and deserted, save for the small, white figure of a girl who was leaning languidly against one of the rough, supporting pillars in a shadowy corner.

The dark-green leaves of the woodbine threw her exquisitely chiseled oval face into soft relief. The ivory tint of her complexion; the clear scarlet of her sensitive mouth, the dark, almost



purple hue of her eyes, half-veiled by long, fine lashes, and the masses of light, golden hair, that curled in large, soft rings about her forehead and slender throat, formed an harmonious study in color that must have appealed to a less keen and cultured artistic taste than Harry's. Two magnificent hounds stood beside her; on the head of each the girl placed a small, restraining hand as we approached, but her calm, immobile face expressed neither interest nor curiosity.

"Ah, Pastelle! little will-o'-the-wisp, who would have dreamed of finding a young deer, caring for nothing but the mountains and the lakes, living in a sad, mute world of her own, in which affection, or tenderness, or speech had no part. We drew our chairs into the moonlight, Harry choosing one close beside me and at some distance from Annie, who had very suddenly become aware of Horace Hendon's claim upon her attention and courtesy. We sat for some time in that restful silence which follows intense and long-anticipated pleasure. The gay music from the large house on the hill came floating down to us at intervals on the warm, sweet air. In moments of stillness we heard the dreary monotone of the crickets, and the cry of a night bird, shrill and clamorous, or Annie's merry laugh and young Hendon's eager replies to her careless interrogations as they walked up and down the piazza.

Harry, with a quiet, far-away look on



his handsome face, hummed softly an old Bedouin love song. Mrs. Leighton laid her gentle hand upon his arm as she caught the melody, saying: "Ah, Harry, that carries me back to your boyhood days. Sing the dear, sad song for me again," and she pushed the heavy hair from my boy's forehead and gazed fondly into his upturned face, as if to reassure herself of "a love that shall not die."

The very night seemed to hush itself as the tender, pleading voice uttered the beseeching words of the song:

—"the midnight hears my cry,  
I love thee, I love but thee,  
With a love that shall not die  
Till the sun grows cold  
And the stars are old,  
And the leaves of the judgment-book  
unfold."

Through an open window I watched a small white figure creep slowly and stealthily over the uncarpeted floor of the old sitting-room. Unnoticed, save by myself, she came through the window and up to my side, her great violet eyes fixed on Harry's face. I could feel her small hands tremble as they touched, unconsciously, my arm. Over and over, the wild Arabian melody, thrilling and plaintive, reiterated its plea. As the last words sighed themselves away, Harry turned and once more caught a glimpse of Pastelle's exquisite face. I saw the light, born of delight, illumine every feature of his countenance. I put out my hand to bring the



girl a little nearer, but it fell unheeded. She had vanished as she had come.

There is little to tell of the glorious, golden summer days that followed. They were filled with quiet, happy recreation. Hunting and fishing in the cool morning hours for the young men, while Mrs. Leighton, Annie or I worked or read in a retired corner of the ample piazza that was tacitly recognized as our own. Our evenings were passed, for the most part, on the placid, but to me always dark and solemn waters of the lake, upon which Whiteface and Mount Marcy frowned. Not much to tell of these days, and yet much to remember.

Pastelle was with us almost constantly, but so were the birds and the sunshine, and the butterflies, and we gave her scarcely more heed. A week had slipped away. I was writing one afternoon in my own room when Harry entered.

"Do not let me disturb you, Cousin Dorothy," he said, "I came for a little visit by ourselves, but any other time will do as well."

"My time is always at your disposal, Harry, dear," I replied, "and I have really seen almost nothing of you."

"You are sure to see a great deal of me if you consent to assist me in the work I have in mind," Harry laughingly returned. "To be honest, Cousin Dorothy, I believe I have found my ideal face up here in the mountains, after having searched the world over and been disappointed again and again. I shall have no rest or peace, at any rate,



until I get to work and watch the face on my canvas reproduce the one that haunts me continually."

"How many, many times before have you entertained this thought, my boy?" I queried with a smile.

"Do not be unkind," he begged. "It is just because I am not sure, that Pastelle's face so fascinates me; there is something in it I cannot grasp, it is forever eluding me."

"Are you convinced that this subtle, elusive something is really there?" I suggested, wondering silently that such well trained eyes should see so dimly. Harry did not reply, but stood gazing out of the open window with a dissatisfied, perplexed knitting of his brows.

"I would like very much to make a few studies of the girl's face, Cousin Dorothy," he exclaimed at last. "She is at her best in the woods or upon the water. Will you go with us for a row after tea to-night?"

"With great pleasure, Harry," I hastened to reply. "I assure you I did not intend to be cold or critical; forgive me, if my words implied as much."

And so began the end. At morning and at evening, in the pure, untainted hours of early day, in the mellow, tender calm of softly-stealing night, we drifted in the sunshine or the shadow or the moonlight over the waveless water. Sometimes we rested, our tiny, shell-like bark moored safely under overhanging trees, while Harry silently sketched, glancing quickly now and



then at the weird, delicate face that was always turned to him.

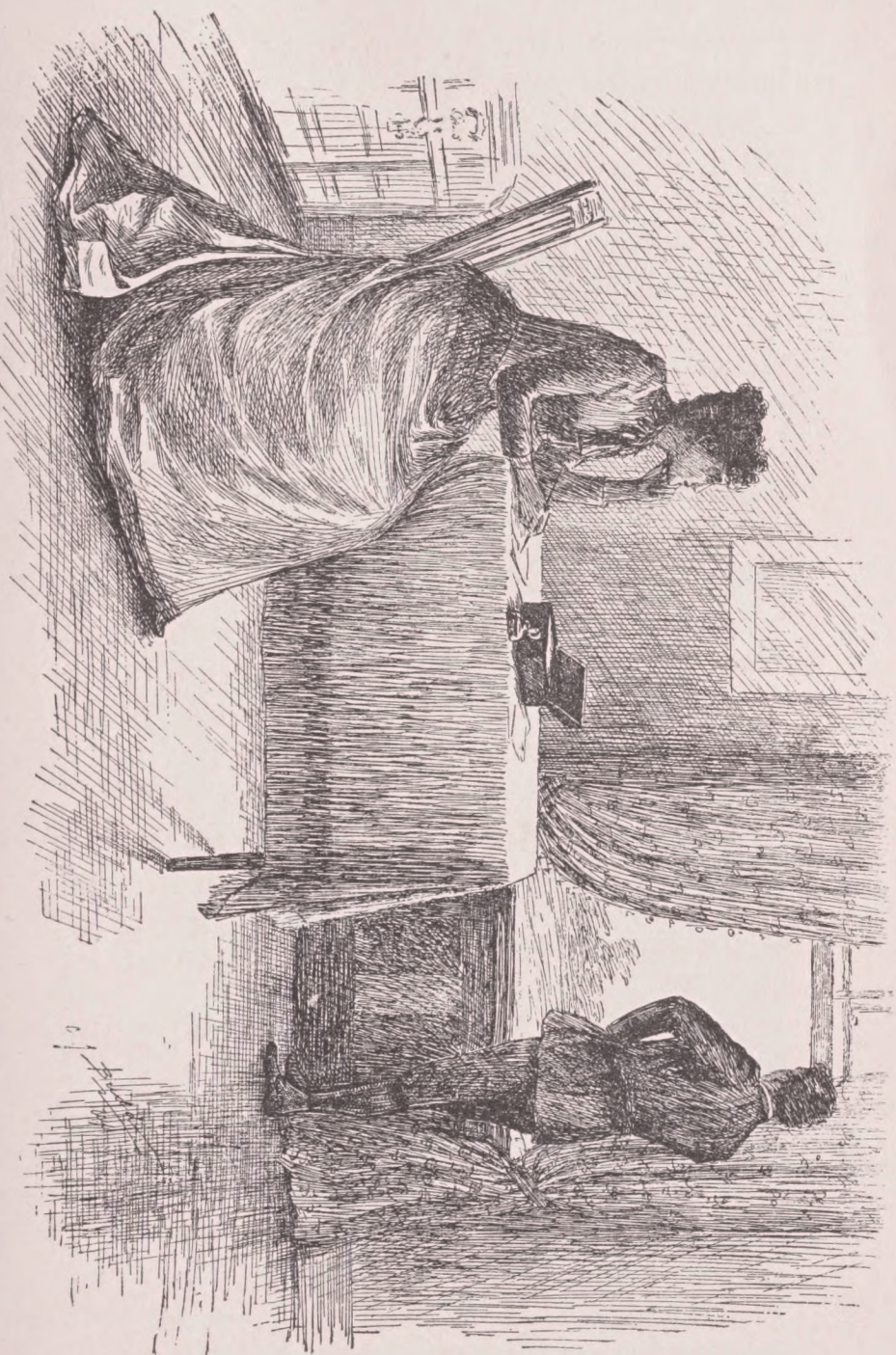
One night Pastelle seemed unusually listless and weary. Her hands were crossed in her lap, the creamy lids drooped low over her purple eyes, and the first look of human sadness I had ever seen upon her face, touched it with a shadow. I whispered softly to Harry, "Sing!" It was of little moment that the words of the song had no meaning for her ears. She listened only to the voice, to the dreamy, delicious music that thrilled her dormant, unconscious soul to an almost painful ecstasy. Into the great, quiet eyes there crept a tender, mournful longing; her scarlet lips were parted and through them came short, quick respirations. She lifted her slender hands and held them out to Harry with a mute, impassioned gesture, and the light upon her face was not of earth or time. I was glad when the little boat-house was reached, and we could restore Pastelle to Miss Harriet's watchful care.

"Harry, remember the trust committed to my care is a sacred one. I shall never help you to find a human heart that you may trifle with it," were my parting words that night.

\* \* \* \* \*

Annie Leighton was not quite herself at this time—her gay, thoughtless, careless self. When she was no longer the central wheel about which all the others revolved, it was very hard for her to reconcile herself to the unaccustomed





"HARRY DID NOT REPLY, BUT STOOD GAZING OUT OF THE OPEN WINDOW." (*p.* 79.)



position. To Pastelle she was coolly indifferent ; she would have scorned the idea of rivalry with an "innocent barbarian," as she often designated the girl, who, on her part, rarely deigned to notice the imperial beauty, whose self-love she had all unwittingly injured. Neither was Pastelle now the same girl we had once known. There was a subtle charm, a pathetic wistfulness, in her beautiful face, that spoke of some mental or spiritual experience, which the girl herself could not fully comprehend. The vague, unreal expression was gone from her eyes. They were purest crystal windows now, through which a living, loving soul found utterance. Her sensitive mouth smiled intelligent recognition, and more than once I listened eagerly for the faltering word I believed was trembling on her lips. Strangest of all, however, she seemed to care less for human society and increasingly more for the solitude and sympathy of Nature. At the first faint touch of dawn I heard the call upon the silver whistle that summoned "Carver and Kaiser" to her. Often at dinner a handful of rare, pink water lilies or a bunch of feathery maidenhair fern laid at Harry's plate bore silent witness to a long, lonely tramp and the girl's innocent affection. It was unjust, I reasoned, to censure the gentle courtesy that bordered upon tenderness, the lingering look of that pity that is so akin to love, which Harry bestowed in return. Anything less than these mute responses to an affection as



pure and as spontaneous as that of a little child, would have wounded a frail soul-life that was hardly aware of its existence. And yet the end must come.



The summer would soon be over. The nodding plumes of the golden-rod were evidence, and the crickets chirped it with a sorrowful persistence. I must take counsel with Miss Harriet, I said to myself. The aid and comfort my sympathetic heart has offered must not fail her when she may need both.



### III.

A TELEGRAM summoning Albert Leighton to New York without delay, decided Mrs. Leighton and Annie to take a short trip to the seashore. Harry and I were to remain at "Buxton's" a little longer, joining the Leightons after a round-about journey to New York, in time to go over to England with them early in October.

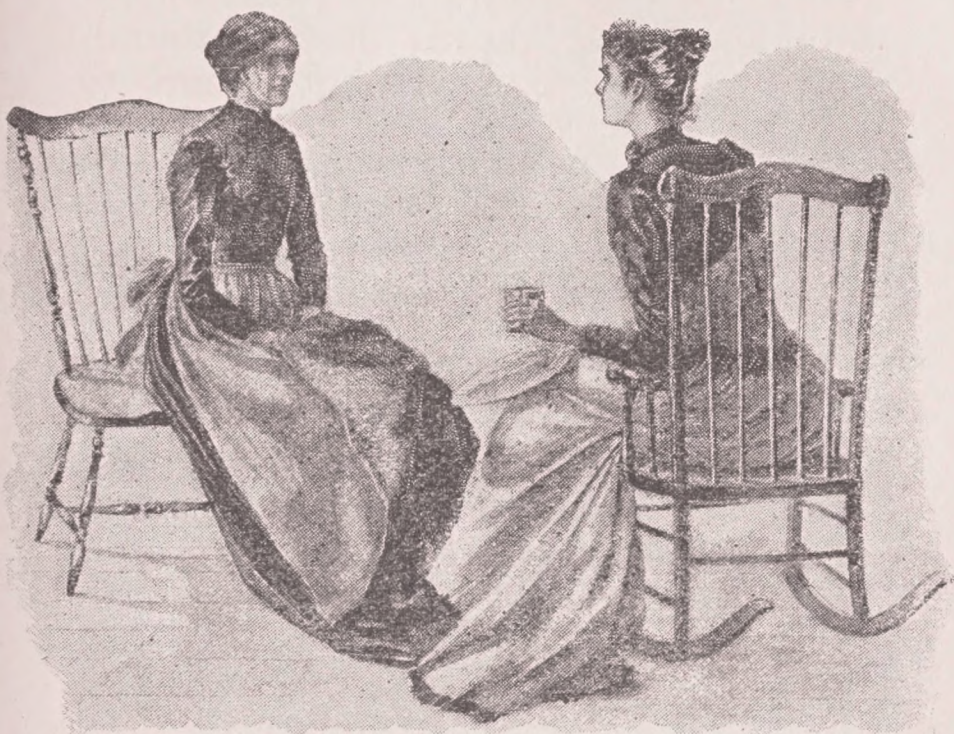
It chanced that on the day of their departure Harry and I were the only guests in the house. One entire family had gone the day before, and the remaining guests had taken advantage of a gray and cloudy morning, the first in many weeks of fierce and burning sunshine, to make several long-talked-of trips to neighboring lakes or ponds.

I had walked down to the pier with Harry, who was going off with his canvas and brushes for a few hours' quiet work in a secluded but delightful spot on one of the small islands of the large lake, where he, Pastelle and I had passed many happy hours. As I returned by way of a narrow, winding path, leading up to the rear of the house, I saw Miss Harriet putting the long, low dining-room in order, hanging branches of red-berried asparagus over the windows, covering the large tables with pink mosquito netting, and finally closing the blinds at the windows not shaded by the broad piazza. She smiled



in her quaint, prim way, as I came slowly up the path, and said kindly: "You're lookin' very warm and tired-like, Mrs. Manning. Come in here, where it's cool, and I'll get you some ice-water."

She brought a low rocker, her own soft and broken palm-leaf fan, and a glass of water, into which she had



"SOMETHING TO SAY CONCERNING PASTELLE."

poured some of her delicious, crimson raspberry shrub.

Miss Harriet was a woman of few words, and her little acts of gracious courtesy were quickly and silently performed. She was about to leave the room when I asked, hesitatingly, "Can't you spare me a few of your precious moments this morning, Miss Harriet? I have something to say to you concerning Pastelle."



She seated herself on the edge of a high-backed, wooden chair opposite me, threw one corner of her large, dark calico apron over her hands, and turned her careworn face towards me.

As tenderly, as delicately as I knew how, I asked her to give me the child of her heart for a few short months ; at least, for the bleak, cold winter that would ere long bind this mountain home in chains of ice and bands of snowy drift. I promised to take her, as though she were my own, to the sunniest, softest climes ; to give her loving watchful care, and more than all else, to seek the counsel of celebrated physicians and specialists in the hope that voice and speech might be Pastelle's.

"Will you trust me, Miss Harriet ? I have learned to love your sweet, wild mountain-flower, and all that I can do will be for love's dear sake."

The woman's face before me was white and strained, the worn, scarred hands under the old calico apron were tightly clasped, her lips moved, but no words passed them. If love triumphed at last, I should never forget the measure of her agony.

"I hadn't thought of it in this way, that Pastelle might be taken from *me*," she faltered brokenly. "I'm not unmindful tho' of your kindness," she continued. "You can wait a little, can't you, just a little while before you must know ?"

"I shall not consent to anything concerning Pastelle that does not fulfill your tenderest, truest desire for her, dear Miss



Harriet. If I have asked too much, forgive me, and do not let the thought distress you for one moment."

She took my hand in hers with a quick, impulsive touch, and walked with her head erect to the door in silence.

\* \* \* \* \*

Miss Susan served at our rather late dinner that day, and in reply to my inquiry, "Has not Mr. Manning returned?" she said she had not seen him, but heard him accept an invitation from one of the young men at the Stannard House to drive over to Bloomfield, a tiny village some miles away, and that he offered the use of his boat for the rest of the day and evening to a brother of the same young man.

The morning, that had promised a little relief from the intense and enervating heat of an unusually severe autumn, became almost oppressive as it wore on to afternoon. The air was heavy and filled with vapor. Enormous black clouds hung over the distant mountain peaks, and the stillness that brooded over all nature was almost painful in its premonition.

I had seen nothing of Pastelle, since she waved a silent and careless good-bye to the Leightons in the early morning from the steps of the piazza, where she stood fair, pure and untroubled as the fragile Alpine flower, Edelweiss, which was Harry's favorite name for her. I was in quest of her when I met Miss Harriet, much disturbed, who exclaimed, "There's a storm comin'! Such a



storm as we haven't had this summer, nor for many a year before. I can't imagine what's become of Pastelle. She's awful nervous and frightened at the least bit of thunder or lightning; has she been with you, Mrs. Manning?" The woman's voice trembled with emotion; a scarlet spot on either cheek convinced me that she was thoroughly alarmed. Passing my arm through hers, I suggested that we go down to the pier; Pastelle, possibly, did not know of Mr. Manning's return, and had gone to warn him of the approaching storm. Miss Harriet, almost unconsciously, slipped away from me and hurried over the hot, slippery, grass-grown path to the boat-house. Miss Susan and Miss Sarah were just behind me. When we reached the lake, the eldest sister turned to us, saying sharply "It's gone! her boat's gone! and Carver and Kaiser are tied to the ring."

Sullen, black and motionless, the dreary, treacherous water stretched before us; tall, grim and green the trees on every shore stood gaunt, like giant sentinels. Occasionally a bird skimmed wearily over the surface of the lake, its fluttering wings just escaping the water; over all the thick, hot air closing above and around us like an invisible, impenetrable cloud.

Out on the sloping, narrow pier stood the lonely, anxious woman, whose piercing eyes searched the sky and the water, while her white lips moved in silent prayer. Suddenly a cry, glad, yet fear-



ful, broke the awful stillness. With arms outstretched, she called "Come, come quickly, darling, I'm a-waitin'! Nuthin' shall harm ye; Harriet's here."

So far away, that to our less keen vision from the shelter of the boat-house, it was hardly more than a speck, was a boat. Moving, was it? Only love could tell.

"He holds the storm in the hollow—in the hollow of His hand," murmured Miss Harriet. "Come quick, dearie; Harriet's a-prayin', but the storm's got to come pretty soon; you must be *quick*, Pastelle."

Yes, we could see it now, the frail bark canoe, the small, white figure of the girl who guided it over the crystal sea. Half—a little more than half the distance that seemed so little and was yet so great.

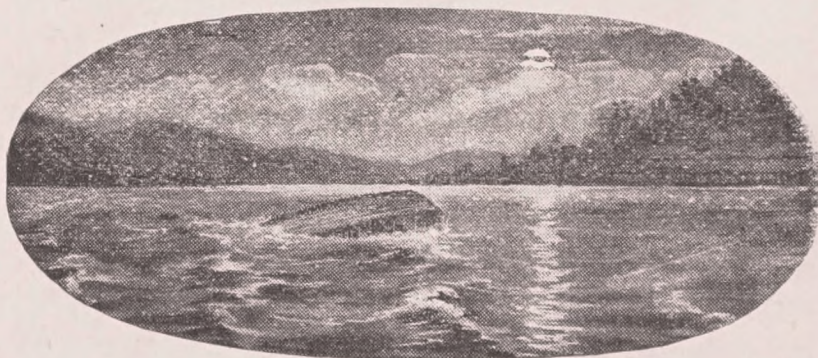
In one corner of the boat-house, with her face to the wall, Miss Susan knelt with bowed head; close beside me, her hands convulsively grasping my arm, Miss Sarah tottered, her face wet with the tears that rolled unchecked over its wrinkled surface.

A breath, a whisper in the pines, a something that fanned our brows, a ripple on the water, a little heaving of the placid bosom, where the tiny boat was—and once more that sad, shrill cry, "Come quicker, quicker, darling; don't you hear Harriet? Didn't ye see the ripple and feel the wind? Oh! if Harriet could only walk to ye, my baby!" and then those piled-up, broken masses of



clouds just for one moment, how or why, God only knew, parted, and through the rift the sun shone, straight and full on the beautiful face. Harry's words, "as beautiful as one of Fra Angelico's angels," flitted through my mind, but I whispered to Miss Sarah, "as beautiful as one of the angels of God." Then the darkness seemed more dense—more real for the momentary brightness. For an instant, stillness, then another shiver through the trees, a faint, dull roar. Carver and Kaiser sniffed the rude board floor with burning, dilating nostrils. Swiftly and silently out of the jaws of death the frail bark skimmed. A few more strokes and it would be safe.

Just then came one white, cruel, blinding flash, one peal that rang from mountain top to mountain top, and out on the lashing, whirling, plunging water Pastelle's little boat tossed its tiny keel turned upward to the sky.





# A MEDLEY OF THE MIDWAY PLAISANCE.

BY A. B. WARD.



THE captive balloon was of less importance financially than the restaurant. Few ventured into it, although invariably tempted to a nearer view of the gigantic brown forehead, peering grimly over the placarded walls. "How big is it?" they would ask, lounging around with their hands in their pockets. "How long are the ropes?" "Two dollars, you say, to go up? Does that cover the round trip?" And they usually walked away as they came. But

almost no one escaped out of the restaurant without some expenditure, for the waiters were the hardiest set on Midway, and when they scowled at a man and asked him what he would have, it required considerable courage to answer "Nothing."

If Mrs. Read—or "Mis. Sread," as they



called her—happened to be about, the waiters were more courteous. In fact, everything went pretty much as Alma Read directed, at the sign of the Captive Balloon. She controlled the kitchen and the café, bought the provisions, bullied the cook, and kept the dish-washers from mobbing the newest of their number, Letty Anderson, whom they pecked at as barnyard fowls peck at a swallow because she was so evidently out of her sphere. "You don't know what you are going into," Alma Read had told her, when she presented herself for a position, the atmosphere of her country home clinging to her neat skirts and carefully-braided hair.

"I am determined to see the Fair," cried the young enthusiast, "and I am ready to do anything. I couldn't see it without working; I haven't the means."

"There are a lot of your kind here," said Alma Read, smiling kindly at Letty; and there were. One saw them everywhere — pushing chairs and taking charge of exhibits if they were men, and selling baubles in the booths if they were women. They looked tired and white and bored. One questioned if they were getting more than the commercial aspect of the Fair. And dish-washing!

"But I have a college professor out at the cigar-stand," said Alma Read. "'Professor Peter Leigh,' his letters come directed to him. He belongs in a college somewhere out West. He came in one day and asked for work. I told him I wanted a night porter. 'But,' said I,



'can you stand it to be called Peter, to be sworn at and ordered around?' He said he could, and he came on duty that night at eight o'clock, put on his calico jumper and overalls, performed his duties and made no complaint, like the gentleman he is. As soon as there was a vacancy out there I popped him into it."

While she talked, Alma Read watched the face of the little girl, flushing and brightening with sympathy for Professor Peter Leigh in his sacrifice of personal dignity to the Fair.

"That's just the way I feel," Letty responded eagerly. "I am ready for anything." So she tucked up her sleeves, put on a gingham apron, and washed beer-mugs and sandwich-plates all day long.

There were other *dramatis personæ* on the boards of the Captive Balloon: "Professor" Ives, the aeronaut, who managed the concern; Mademoiselle, shaking her curls as a poodle shakes his ears, to emphasize the wit of her coquettish songs; Manuelita, dancing the color out of her cheeks and the sparkle out of her large dark eyes at an hour when she should have been in bed, poor child! the Mexican boys, in velvet trousers, embroidered jackets and sombreros, playing their sweet, melancholy songs with a far-away, homesick look; and Sydow, the pianist, bringing drawing-room manners and a stiff, martial bearing into the midst of the informalities of the tent. The waiters hated Sydow, the troupe



called him a "queer duck ;" and Alma Read took him under her able protection, until by a fillip of Fortune's finger he became the hero of the place, instead of the object of its ridicule and scorn.

But that was later in the season ; now, when July was scorching the grass along the Plaisance and the business of being amused had become a serious affair, when even the farmers who drifted into the tent were critical of the songs and dances and "calkerlated that two dollars was a pile o' money to pay for resken life and limb in thet balloon," and when bad temper had accumulated like electricity, Sydow's long, grave face and spectacled eyes, and the close-fitting black-silk cap which he never removed, were the signal for all sorts of irregularities.

"That German chap 'll have to knock down one or two of those waiters if he wants to get along," drawled the aeronaut, lounging up to the decorated pen where Alma Read was straightening out the accounts of the curly-headed cash girl.

"In just a minute, Mr. Ives," said Alma, abstractedly. "You say the gentleman gave a five-doliar gold piece?"

"Yes'm, and got no change, and he thinks Tom has it."

"I'll take your place here for an hour and you keep out of sight. Tom 'll bring it up here to change it, if he has it. Now, Mr. Ives—" but the aeronaut had lounged away.

With clear gray eyes, which saw ev-



everything without seeming to see, Alma watched the rows of little tables and the figures that went to and fro.

Sydow, after a series of wordy arguments with Jake, in which the latter persistently misunderstood him, had obtained a sandwich, over which he brooded with the mournfulness of a raven, his black cap drawn low on his brows. The troupe were lunching noisily at another table; and at still another the Mexicans toyed disdainfully with their knives and forks. "I must get those boys some curry," mused Alma. "Ah, there comes Tom."

Affecting indifference, the white-aproned waiter swung up to the window and flung a coin on the desk. Alma looked up from the book in which she was writing. A swift glance shot from her eyes into his. He turned without a word, took off his apron, and precipitately left the hall.

"D'ye get it?" asked the cash-girl, coming up.

"D'ye get it?" echoed Mr. Ives over her shoulder.

For answer Alma held up the coin.

"How in the world did you do it? How did you know he had it?" asked the aeronaut, walking by her side down the hall.

"I was once a private detective," answered the woman quietly. "Excuse me, now, unless there is something in particular. I've promised to let Miss Anderson out of the kitchen for an hour with Professor Leigh."



"The little dish-washer? I thought so. Good-bye," and the aeronaut sauntered back to his idle air-ship.

Like turns to like, everywhere; most of all when surrounded by differing elements. Before Letty Anderson had been bound to her soapy altar a day, her fellow-victim in the court had found her out, and had determined to send her home if she would go; if not, why then he would make it as pleasant for her as possible. And how pleasant that was, only those young men and women know who varied their tasks at the Fair by visits to galleries and museums, who saw, together, the Convent and the Wooded Island, took gondola rides under the moon, and heard the German students sing in the streets of old Vienna. Not on the tennis-field or in the ball-room does companionship become most delightful, but where the finer vibrations of the spirit accompany the tingling of the nerves. Peter had his reward. He heard himself called Professor in a tone which went with the title, he was inquired of concerning things abstruse and profound, and he resumed his rôle of instructor with a pupil who invited instruction. When the two put the Captive Balloon behind them and went out to see the Fair, none would have dreamed that the bright face of the girl had been lifted from a dish-tub, or that the boy was he who regarded the world so fiercely from the cigar-stand.

The story of Tom and the gold piece



had gone from kitchen to court, and Professor Leigh commented upon it to Miss Anderson as they walked up Midway.

"She certainly is a remarkable woman," he said with an apologetic inflection. "The way she manages that crowd beats Hagenbeck with the tigers."

"She told me she was the daughter of a jailer," said Letty, "and that she had learned how much power there is in the human eye."

"Did she?" exclaimed Peter. "She told me she had been a professional nurse, and I heard her say to Mademoiselle that she was on the stage at one time."

"She may have been all three," said Letty. "But I am surprised that she is satisfied to be in such a place as that."

"Perhaps she isn't," said Peter quizzically. "Are you?"

Letty laughed with a blush at her own inconsistency. There was a pause, and then the professor mounted the metaphorical rostrum always at his command and began to explain the continuous arch of the Ferris Wheel.

Meanwhile, the glaring day softened into twilight, and twilight vanished at the rising of the moon. In the tent of the Captive Balloon the glasses clinked merrily. Mademoiselle, in a vivid yellow dress, sang a song, "The Midway, the Midway," with the shrill re-iterance of a cicada; and Manuelita pirouetted bravely and shook her ribboned tambourine. Following and sustaining them, Sydow set his supple fingers to the keys; his



figure seemed held erect, as the balloon was held by its cables—at least that was what Alma thought, looking on. And having nothing better to do she went out to verify her simile by comparison.

There was no one in the yard. The black engines glistened in the moonlight, the board walks leading to the dressing-rooms of the miniature theatre were white as snow. Poised on its web of cables, the balloon seemed bigger and more alive than ever. She tiptoed over the ropes and seated herself in the basket, which swayed and rocked beneath her. She made a picture in this unique setting, and realized a lukewarm regret that there was none to see.

The door of a dressing-room opened softly, but it was only Sydow. His near-sighted eyes failed to find her as he advanced stiffly down the walk. He believed himself to be alone. When he was so near that she might have touched him he paused and looked up into the sky. "Ach, mein Gott!" he exclaimed, and sighed piteously, pushing back his cap. The moonlight fell full upon him, and there flashed into sight the outline of a silver cross set into his forehead. "Mein Gott!" he cried again, then drew on the cap and went back as he came.

Alma arose and left the car, determined to solve the mystery, but whether as the jailer's daughter in pursuit of a culprit, or a detective following up a clew, or a nurse filled with pity for a suffering man, she herself could not



have told.

As she entered the tent she saw Sydow leaving it by the main entrance, and, keeping him in sight, she threaded her way through the crowd.

Outside all was gay and bright. The arc-lights mocked the midsummer moon riding high in the heavens, for it was past eleven. Countless lanterns of various hues were strung, like Aladdin's jeweled fruit, along the way. The visitors had left the street to its occupants, who came pouring out of their close quarters to enjoy the night: dwarfish Javanese women in scanty garments, tall, striding Arabians in flowing draperies, turbaned Turks and Armenians, Indians with long, straight hair, and Persian matrons daintily clad. Tinsel glittered and soft tints brightened as their wearers passed under the lights. The air was full of chattering talk and good-humored laughter. Above their heads the great wheel defined itself against the sky, and on all sides, tower and minaret and floating banner mingled in the conglomerate of a restless dream.

Sydow hurried on, under the low bridge and across the wide, free spaces of the Exposition grounds. Before him the tall buildings loomed, ghostly white. To the winged forms which wreathed them, the wanderer turned as if beseeching them to take on the human helpfulness they simulated.

How still it was! Smooth as a mirror lay the waters of the lagoon, un-



broken by an oar ; and the huge, placid cattle upon the brink guarded their own repose. Baring his brow, Sydow stepped out under the open sky. A groan escaped him. With his upturned, yearning face, sealed with the silver cross, he might have been some martyr-saint, praying with clasped hands.

Gliding from the shadow, Alma advanced and laid her hand upon his arm. For an instant his brain reeled. In her light dress, with her shapely, uncovered head, she might have stepped down from some cornice or pediment near, as pitying statues used to do in the days when men were not dependent solely on their own poor efforts, or the scanty help they get from one another.

Seeing his perturbation, she called him by name, and he recognized her with a laugh which was almost hysterical. "What is it, Sydow?" she repeated soothingly. "What troubles you? Tell me, and let me help you."

"I am the most unhappy one alive," he sighed, "and none can help me."

"How do you know that?" she answered briskly. "Come, sit down on this bench and tell me all about it. What have you done? How did you get that mark on your forehead?"

There is no more wholesome treatment for morbidness than the assumption of its absence. Dropping his melodrama, Sydow answered in a voice almost as matter-of-fact as her own: "That was gif me in my own country on account of a girl; that was gif me



by her cousin because I try to see her. She luv me and I luv her, and they would not haf it so, and Fritz, her cousin, haf some words with me and gif me this." He took off the cap altogether and permitted her to scrutinize the plate covering the fracture in his forehead.

"Queer that it should be just in the shape of a cross," she mused, examining it with the critical eye of a surgeon.

"It is a token," cried Sydow; "the cross is on my life. I must suffer and be alone all my days."

"Pshaw!" said the woman coolly. "You are too sentimental. Go on, what next?"

"What next?" repeated Sydow, bewildered.

"What did you do next? How long ago did this happen?"

"Fife years," said Sydow; "and I haf been so unlucky—ever'ting against me."

"You haven't been here, in this city, all the time?"

"No; I play with an orchestra in New Yo'k; the violin is my instrument; I play with ——" and he named an orchestra known to all who know such things.

"How did you lose your place?"

The questions came so quietly, yet with such authority, that there was no resenting them or withholding an answer.

"I behafe bad," he answered with the simplicity of a child. "I haf been a fool like ever'ting. I get so discour-



aged, and I want my Mina." The spectacles over his eyes were foggy as he looked at her.

"If you really want her," said Alma with severity, "why don't you save your money and go back and get her?"

"They won't let me haf her, don't I tell you?" he cried passionately.

"Humph!" said the woman before him. She rose and stood up, tall and strong in the moonlight. "If I were a man," she said deliberately, and stretching out one rounded arm in emphasis as she spoke, "if I were a man and knew that the woman I loved loved me, no power on earth should keep me away from her."

Sydow sprang to his feet, his face aflame. "And so it shall not," he shouted. "I will work, I will go, I will claim her. Ah, thou hast spoken good words to me this night." Before he had concluded she was gone, passing swiftly between the buildings, across the parks and into Midway, now almost forsaken.

The night porter greeted her as she entered the tent of the Captive Balloon, but she gave no sign of hearing him. Like one pursued she traversed the hall and entered the tiny room she called her own. There she sank upon the couch and covered her face with her hands. Hour after hour she sat thus, with that immobility which does not denote calm, but the tenseness of an inward struggle. When the white light of the moon began to be infused with the flush of sunrise she arose and un-



locked a small trunk, standing in the corner. Her hands did not tremble, but there was an eagerness in their groping like that of one who hungers and reaches out for bread.

The picture which she pulled out from among the piles of clothing was a photograph of a man who might have been twenty-five or less. The light of youth had not faded from his fine, dark eyes. The power of youth and its confidence were in the proud poise of the head and in the alertness of every feature. Long and earnestly she studied it, with a strange, inscrutable smile. Outside, the clatter of dishes, the tread of feet and loud talk, mingled with a ringing oath or two, announced the opening of the restaurant. The refined face before her appeared to frown at the vulgarity and the din.

"No, you never could stand it," she said, shaking her head, the smile still on her lips.

She replaced the picture carefully in the trunk and turned the key. Except for a hint of shadow under her eyes no one would suspect her vigil. Years ago she had taught herself to endure and show no sign. The desperate men who carried trays to the tent of the Captive Balloon had hearts of wax compared with hers. Yet she kept her cheeks of cream, while upon their physiognomies "you could have cracked a nut," as the saying goes.

When, as occasionally happened, the balloon was loosed from its moorings



and floated off like a big brown bubble, the passenger who leaned over the edge of the car to look at the retreating panorama of the Fair saw its enormous structures and generous spaces as ant-hills and run-ways, swarmed by countless figures, moving in regular procession to and fro.

To search for some particular person in that multitude seemed hopeless, as many realized who, at one time or another, lost their grasp upon a companion in the crowd. To come hither, purposing to find some one, without an appointed place of meeting, without even a clew to the whereabouts of the individual, was madness. And yet of just such madness was Miss Van Holst guilty when she accepted her uncle's invitation to visit America and the Exposition, together with his daughters Irma and Gertrude, and his son Fritz. Was not Hermann in America? And were not all the world to be at the Fair? So Mina threw off the melancholy which had oppressed her, and was so exacting about the becomingness of her traveling gown that her aunt and cousins whispered behind her back, "She has forgotten him."

Forgotten him! It seemed to Mina that her tell-tale heart would betray itself by its loud beating when she followed her uncle and cousins through the turnstile of the Exposition grounds and gazed at the sunny splendor of the halls beneath whose arches she expected to find her lover. As the days



went on however, and among the thousands whom she met the longed-for face did not appear, the high white buildings took on a cold, forbidding look, and from the multitudinous treasure which they held she turned with loathing. In vain Irma and Gertrude called her to admire this and that; in vain Fritz pestered her with attentions; they could not rouse her from her apathy.

"The child needs amusement," said her uncle. "My own head whirls with trying to take in the sights. We will go down to Midway and have a good laugh."

And to Midway they went: to the innocent gayety and the monotonous music of a Javanese wedding; to a homelike German cottage, out of whose small-paned window Mina stared with a white, desperate face, while the rest exclaimed over carved chairs and curious dishes; to Cairo street, where Irma and Gertrude mounted a camel and screamed with laughter as it strode along, where Fritz hung his long legs over a donkey to run races with an American youth who cried "Sick-em!" to his knowing little beast.

Every one laughed — every one but Mina, who waited, dejectedly, sitting on the steps of a store where lotos bloomed in queer glass jars, noting the perfume but not caring to lift her head to learn whence it came. Their romping over, the cousins returned and led the way to the temple of Luxor, into whose shady



recesses the scarlet-robed priests were bearing their boat-like shrine. Listlessly Mina followed. The dervishes gathered in a circle and swayed to and fro, wagging their heads. A white-robed priestess arose, and extending her wing-like sleeves, whirled around and around in utter surrender to the strange tinkling music and the jar of her own throbbing pulses. A sudden dizziness seized Mina, looking on. "I am faint; I will go out to the door until you come," she whispered to Irma. Fritz, sitting near, caught the words.

"I will go too," he whispered, officiously leaving his seat.

"Do let me alone for an instant," exclaimed Mina, and pushing her way past him, hurried down the aisle. She saw, on pillar and wall, in colors which emphasized their grotesqueness, Osiris and Ammon-Ra, and Egyptian heroes, armed and splendid. She saw the mummy-cases arranged in rows, each upraised lid wrought into the image of a human form; each smiling, stolid face lit by the lamp swung under its bearded chin.

"Rameses II., who persecuted the Israelites," read Mina, and bent forward curiously. Small, cruel eyes, showing beadlike, under half-closed lids; thin, dry lips, parted over broken yellow teeth, answered her innocent glance. He knew, this black-visaged king, what was in her heart, and mocked her tender quest, as he had mocked the zeal of Moses centuries ago. "Look at me,"



he said, "and see what becomes of love and hope."

With a smothered cry the frightened girl rushed from the place. Down the steps and through the crowded street she flew, past the camels and their laughing loads, the small, scudding donkeys and the noisy lads, out into the broad Plaisance, and on still, never stopping until she saw, within a stone's throw, the square yellow and white gates which marked the limit of the Fair. This, then, was the end of the long, weary search! The taunting horror of the confined face arose before her. "Life and Love and Hope are brief," it said. "Only Death is long."

"Help me, oh, help me!" she moaned. "Pitying Mother of God, I shall go mad!"

"Mina, Mina," rang out above the hum of many voices and the tread of many feet. "Mina, heart's dearest, thou art come."

Then all the crowded street and climbing towers went around before her eyes, and Mina fell, but knew in falling that her head was on Hermann's breast and his arms were around her.

The procession moving up and down Midway stopped to stare, the waiters of the Captive Balloon came out like bees and swarmed around with offers of assistance, but to none would Sydow intrust his precious burden.

"Take her right into my room," said Alma, and led the way herself.

"She is not dead! Mein Gott! she



is not dead?" cried Sydow, so white was the fair round face upon the pillows.

"Nonsense; she will be all right in a minute," answered Alma, slapping and pulling the limp form which Sydow had been treating as if it were china. Presently the childish blue eyes opened, and then, with mingled tears and smiles, in broken English and impetuous German, the lovers tried to tell each other in a moment's time all that happened in the long five years.

The silver cross Mina devoutly accepted as a sign of consecration, and Sydow had not the heart to tell her upon what inappropriate scenes its light had shone.

After an hour had passed they heard loud voices in the hall outside and Mina looked as if about to repeat her swoon.

"It is my uncle and Fritz, with Irma and Gertrude," she said faintly.

Sydow started up as if to defy them, but Mina threw her arms around him. "No, no; not that again," she begged. "See, the kind woman has gone to meet them."

Through the partly-opened door they saw Alma advance with more than her wonted dignity toward the excited quartet, who stood gesturing and declaiming in the center of the room. "Were you looking for some one?" they heard her ask.

"Yes," roared Mina's uncle, "and if I don't get an answer soon from this impudent lot of lackeys I'll break their heads."



The waiters grinned.

"For whom were you looking?" asked Alma, quietly.

"For my niece, Mina Van Holst," replied the other. "I know she is here, for people in the street saw her carried in."

"Miss Van Holst is here," replied Alma, "but she is with Baron Sydow, her betrothed husband, and they do not wish to be disturbed."

"Baron Sydow! Ten thousand devils! Is Sydow here?" exclaimed Mina's uncle. Fritz advanced a step or two and there was an angry glitter in his eyes.

"Yes; Baron Sydow is here with her, and they do not wish to be disturbed," repeated Alma.

"Tell him Fritz Van Holst requires his presence," said the cousin.

Alma stood haughtily before him. "I will tell him nothing," she replied.

What he said then, under his breath, and in his own tongue, the watchful waiters did not know, but they read the meaning of the sneer upon his face and sprang forward, to a man, lining up before their mistress, exulting in the opportunity, new to them, of arraying themselves on the side of law and order, yet with the prospect of a fight.

Fritz cooled. There was a grewsome air of experience about the gang, which would lead a bolder man than he to deliberate. He said afterward that Irma and Gertrude held him back.

At any rate, the besieging party somehow deemed it advisable to leave the field, promising, however, to return to-



morrow with re-enforcements.

"Now take her to a minister or a magistrate and have the knot tied," counseled Alma, letting the pair out of the door of the tent, while an admiring audience stood on tiptoe to get a look at them.

But Baron Sydow threw his head back proudly. "I shall send her to Germany, to my own people," he said, loftily, "and when I am through here I will go there to be married."

"Are you a fool?" stormed Alma. "Don't you let her out of your sight. Hold her fast now that you have her, or you don't deserve to be happy."

"Aw right, aw right," stammered Sydow; "jus' as you say," and away he went, walking on air.

The audience disappeared, with the exception of the waiters, who took advantage of a lull in business to talk over the affair.

"I know how it was, just as well as if I'd been there," said Jake, when various conjectures were made as to "how Seedy got his head stove in."

"Huh! you know too much," said Tom, contemptuously.

"Shut up," interposed Sam. "Less hear."

"Well, it was like this," said Jake: "Seedy comes up, bold as brass, and says, 'Gi' me my girl!' and the old man, he says, 'Yer can't have her.' Whiles they were a-talkin', the two fricassees as were here to-day gets hold of Seedy's two arms, and this young



chap who thinks he's so smart outs with a knife and cuts him so," and Jake made a lunge forward in illustration.

"Sounds reasonable," said Sam, nodding wisely; and Jake's story of the fracas became the accepted version. As to the hero himself, he was bewildered by the changed attitude of the waiters. Sam took his hat and Tom his umbrella, and Jake yelled his order across the wooden counter in tones which could be heard half a mile away—that is, when the Dahomey warriors were not disporting on the roof opposite.

"Seedy's a soft-spoken chap," Jake would say when the gang rehearsed his romance among themselves. "But he's a *tarrier* when he gits started."

Sydow had to accept the absurd qualities in which they arrayed him, as he accepted the mantle of Mina's loving idealization. The very tent and pavilion of the Captive Balloon were touched by the Ithuriel spear of Sydow's romance. Allusions to the tender passion brightened all the songs. The air was full of sentiment.

"He'll be the next," said Alma, watching Professor Leigh unfold Miss Anderson's umbrella and guide her carefully around a puddle. He was. He announced it the following day, with a gravity which hardly suited so joyous a theme.

"I have something of a confidential nature to disclose to you, Mrs. Read," he said, solemnly. "I am engaged to Miss Letty Anderson."



"Why, yes, of course," said Alma — "I mean I am very glad. I hope you will be happy."

"Thank you," said Peter simply, and looked the boy he really was. "I shall always remember, and so will Miss Anderson, how kind you have been to us both."

"It is nice to be young," Alma said to herself, smiling, as he walked away. Alma was twenty-five.

A harsh voice broke in upon her reverie. "What are you doing here?" it asked.

She turned to confront the only man in the world who could shake her self-control. For an instant the steady gray eyes wavered and then they traveled swiftly over the unattractive figure before them, taking in the shabby frock coat, the battered hat, the dissipated face with its triumphant smile.

"What are *you* doing?" she asked.

"I am looking for my wife," he answered with a leer. "She knows what I always want. Come, shell out."

Without reply she led him to the little room which had witnessed such a different meeting a few days before.

"How much must you have?" she inquired, throwing back the trunk-lid.

"How much *must* I have?" he repeated, mockingly. "Hullo! who's that?"

The picture lay with its face turned upward, where she had placed it the morning after her talk with Sydow.

"Give it to me!" she demanded, with flashing eyes, as he caught it up for in-



spection.

"Who the devil is it, anyway?" He scowled at the beauty of the face.

"A physician in C——, where you left me without a cent three years ago. I nursed a patient for him."

"The devil you did!"

"Give it to me!" she cried, stretching out her hand.

"Give me the money first and I will."

She flung the purse unopened at him. With a brutal laugh he tore the card across and tossed the halves into her lap, then went out and slammed the door.

\* \* \* \* \*

To the cities built upon the shore of the great inland lakes there comes, sometimes, in mid-August, a chill as of winter. The rain falls in torrents and the wind rages like an uncaged beast. Such a chill, attended by such a storm, came to the city of the World's Fair the night after Alma's interview with her husband. The stately palaces of the Exposition leaked dismally, in spite of the efforts of workmen and guards. On Midway, many a flimsy structure went down before the gale. The pavilion of the Captive Balloon looked like the drenched deck of an ocean steamer, the central office serving for a pilot-house. Over its wet, slippery floors, the waiters dragged chairs and tables to a place of safety.

About the shelterless balloon the rain and wind whirled with redoubled fury. "Varnished silk and hempen twine—bah!" said the rain. "Wooden clappers



and bags of sand—pouf !” said the wind ; and they dashed against it, pulling and pushing, till a cable snapped. Then how they pounded the helpless thing over the ground.

“Gone up, that’s a fact !” said Ives, examining the wreck by the morning’s sunshine.

“Gone down, you mean,” said Alma with a faint smile.

“And there’s that blamed concession,” continued the aeronaut, gnawing his mustache. “We can’t stop ; we’ll have to make the restaurant and the stage pay as well as we can. You’ll have to keep right on, Mrs. Read.”

“Oh, yes,” replied Alma, gravely ; “I’ll have to keep right on.”





## A VERY STRANGE CASE.

BY WILLIAM HINCKLEY.

“**M**ANY singular things have come under my notice during an experience of thirty years in the tracing of criminals and the punishment of their misdeeds, but I think the case of the unfortunate young fellow whose photograph you see there is the most remarkable.”

The speaker, a grizzled inspector of police of the city of N——, tapped the glass covering the likeness of a handsome man of not more than thirty. The face was that of a person of refinement and intelligence, and I was prepared for the next words which fell from my companion's lips.

“It is seldom that a man is led to do wrong, when apparently he has no reason for it, as was the case with young Marden, whose picture that is. We are not surprised when a man steals because fortune has not given him enough to live on, or when he feels that society ‘owes him a living,’ as the saying is; but this young fellow came of one of the best families in the State, and never wanted for a thing that money could buy, yet for him the life of a criminal possessed a fatal attraction.”

We were interrupted by the entrance of a subordinate, who saluted and presented a note. Hastily tearing it open, the inspector read it, and turning to me said: “An appointment down town



at four. I have just time to make it; I'll be back in the course of an hour. In the meantime make yourself at home. You'll find a box of Havanas in the top drawer—matches there; and here, read this—it's a sort of diary that we found at the Marden house when the end of the young fellow's career came;" and, thrusting into my hand a dozen or fifteen loose sheets of foolscap, the veteran hastily quitted the room.

I had plenty of leisure, and the cozy little office at headquarters was not at all an unpleasant place in which to pass time, so, taking the manuscript, I lighted one of my friend's cigars and seated myself in his revolving chair, prepared to learn the history of the young fellow of whom we had been speaking. I could not, however, put his face from my mind, and, rising, I strode across the room to where the photograph hung in its small oak frame. "Surely," thought I, "his was never intended for the life of a criminal! Men of that class show evidences of their evil lives in their countenances, but here is one whom I could not think to find in a place of this sort." I gazed at it long and earnestly, before resuming my chair, and then took up the manuscript, strongly predisposed toward the writer.

The characters were firm and regular, and the closely-written sheets were as legible as type. They bore no title, and, judging from their general appearance, were evidently not intended to become public property. They read as follows:



“To-day there comes over me a presentiment I cannot throw off, and something beyond my power to resist bids me set down here the history of my wasted life.

“I am young—not yet thirty, wealthy and—yes—and handsome, so my friends tell me, though perhaps their judgment is at fault. I was born in this old place, and have lived here most of my life, since my father’s death with no other companion than my Scotch collie ‘Mac.’ Two old and tried servants of my family, Elias the butler and his wife Emily, manage to keep things in order about the house for me, and yield unquestioning obedience to their master’s somewhat capricious wishes. My numerous friends often wonder that I have never married, but not having met my ideal in the other sex, I am satisfied to wait, and, indeed, if the truth were told, well contented to enjoy so-called single blessedness for some years to come.

“I fear I am a good deal of a hermit in my inclinations, and could wish that I was beyond the reach of boredom, in which dwell so many of those who style themselves my friends. As it is, I doubt not that they think me a crank, but I regard their opinion on this point rather lightly. I find entertainment in the companionship of Mac, and together we spend many hours roaming about the estate in fine weather, or remaining in my old-fashioned library when the elements combine to make outdoor life disagreeable. At such



seasons it is my pleasure to take down from the shelves such of the old volumes as appeal to my love of the mysterious and the romantic, while old Mac lies stretched at my feet with a satisfied look in his brown eyes, as though that was the one spot in the world in which he wished to be at that particular moment. Sometimes I find my thoughts wandering into the land of reverie and speculation, and Mac seems to know just what I'm scheming about, for he appears to give a knowing wink, as though congratulating himself upon being his master's only *confidant*.

"I have said I loved mystery. Ever since childhood, when my old nurse poured into my listening ear strange stories of brownies, kelpies, hobgoblins, elves and such folk, I have been keenly alive to things supernatural, and, as I grew to the impressionable age of boyhood, my taste for literature naturally fell into the channels one might expect from such antecedents. Doubtless my good old father would have been in despair had he been told of this phase of his hopeful son's character, but he did not know. My mother died when I was a small child, and he relied implicitly upon the judgment and good sense of old nurse to look after my mental and physical development, merely inquiring into the plans and projects affecting my welfare. My voracious appetite for reading, therefore, satiated itself with stories of brigands and highwaymen, freebooters and plunder, detectives



and crime, to an alarming extent. Poor old nurse was but a sorry scholar, and knew little or nothing about books, so, when she saw me leave the house with a volume under my arm, and knew that I could be found at any hour thereafter lying under the outspreading branches of the majestic trees at the edge of the grove near the house, she was satisfied, and went about her other duties, undoubtedly feeling that her charge was fast growing to be an adornment to the world of literature and wisdom generally.

“As years passed, it became necessary for me to fit myself for the position in society which the wealth and standing of my father assured me, and I was accordingly sent to a university, where I made rapid progress, and from which I was graduated at the age of twenty with fair groundwork on which to lay my future career. Then followed several years spent in traveling, in company with my parent, who dearly loved to go about, and we visited nearly every country on the globe, passing our time judiciously in such places as took our fancy, and naturally I saw many things that fed the flame of my earlier thoughts, modified but not eradicated by a broader experience.

“At the time of life when young men most need the counsel of their parents I was left an orphan and sole heir to this estate and the immense wealth of my father.

“Early in the morning of an oppres-



sive day in July, several years ago, I was seated in my customary easy chair reading the daily paper, old Mac, as usual, at my feet, when my eye fell upon an account of a burglary committed in a neighboring city. The burglar was evidently a blunderer, at least so I thought, for he had been taken almost in the act, and I fell to mentally criticising his mistakes. With the aid of the newspaper description, I was able to arrange the crime for him as it should have been carried out, and so sure was I of the success of my method that I conceived the ridiculous idea of putting it into execution, 'just to prove the correctness of my theory,' I said to myself. I laughed aloud at the utter absurdity of a wealthy and independent man like me becoming a housebreaker, and, strange to relate, the ethical side of the matter did not then present itself to my mind, or, if so, with little emphasis, and I looked upon the thing as a monstrously good joke.

"As I pondered over it, the scheme seemed more and more feasible, and presently I had evolved a plan of campaign which promised much diversion. To be sure there was an element of danger in it, but I liked it rather better on that account.

"With men of my temperament, action follows promptly upon the conception of an idea, and I at once wrote to a firm of safe-makers in a distant city, who were familiar to me, asking them to send a representative to N—— for



consultation. It was my intention, as part of my scheme, to have an iron vault constructed below ground, and in due time I arranged the preliminaries to my entire satisfaction.

"To the vault builders I was simply a man of evident wealth, requiring a place of security in which to keep valuables, and my request that the matter be kept a profound secret was to them a most natural one. I did not wish even my good servants to be informed of the proposed extension to the house, and to insure their ignorance on this point I gave them permission to pay a visit of a few weeks to a relative living at some distance. I told them I expected to have some slight improvements made, and until these were completed would take up my residence at one of the hotels in the city. The simple-hearted old people were delighted at the opportunity given them for an outing, and were soon on their way.

"To keep the existence of the vault from the knowledge of my somewhat inquisitive neighbors was a matter of more difficulty, but this, too, was accomplished by having the metal plates brought to the house in boxes, while the bricks and other material would as well have suggested any ordinary mason work and excited little comment.

"So quickly and well did the builders perform their work that my vault was completed and ready for inspection within a little more than ten days.



The interior is provided with several tiers of strong boxes, each in itself as secure as it could be made, while the vault is a model of its kind and thoroughly *burglar proof*, as I spared no expense to have it made so. Its dimensions inside are about six feet each way, which gives ample space for a person to stand within it comfortably. The room in which it is built is just enough larger than the vault to admit of the door of the latter opening freely, while it is in turn closed by a door, somewhat less secure than that of the vault, but calculated to act as a safeguard in case of necessity. To conceal the approach to the vault, the bookcase on the north side of the room has been arranged to swing on invisible hinges, and is fastened by a spring-lock from behind, which is released by a wire conducted to another part of the library. Leading from the entrance thus provided is a flight of stone steps, which ends abruptly at the door of the vault-room. As I look back upon this stage of my new career, I remember the feeling of intense satisfaction which I had at the successful issue of this step—there were the burglar and his hiding-place and it only remained to provide something to hide.

“With the return of Elias and Emily our little household resumed its former quiet routine, as far as *they* were concerned, but not so with their master; having taken the first step on his downward career, he was impatient to take



the next, and to that end it was necessary to provide some kind of a disguise. A rusty old suit of my father's (wicked perversion of its former character), together with an old slouch hat, served very well for this purpose, but to obtain the needed tools with which to ply my nefarious craft, without attracting attention, was a source of considerable anxiety to me, and, indeed, the danger of discovery seemed so great that I finally determined to make them myself. A taste for mechanics when I was a lad had resulted in a workshop being fitted up on the place, and this still remained as I left it years ago. To convert an old crow-bar into a very respectable 'jimmy' (if such an instrument is ever respectable), was an easy matter, and as I had not contemplated attacking safes, I did not provide a very extensive outfit beyond this. As I write, the incongruity of my position comes to me, and I see myself as I would appear to the world at large, were they aware that the talented man of wealth, Ernest Marden, was a common, or rather an uncommon, housebreaker.

"Having settled upon the country which I deemed most promising as a field of operations, I informed my servants of my intention to be absent for a week or so, which was nothing unusual, as it is my habit to come and go as my somewhat eccentric fancy prompts, and, with grip in hand I found myself toward dusk in a town of considerable size, about fifty miles east of here, where



I obtained lodgings at an inn of moderate charges. As the time approached for my first attempt at burglary, I felt my courage oozing through my fingertips, and realized that my whole scheme would be a fiasco unless I summoned my former confidence; but with the coming of darkness all my old spirit of recklessness and bravado returned, and, having dropped my valise from my window, I silently quitted my room, fully equipped for the work before me.

"I directed my steps through unfrequented streets to a handsome residence on the outskirts of the town, which I had been told by one of the townspeople, in reply to an off-hand question, was the property of a wealthy family who were then absent for the summer season. I was also told that the only persons in charge of the place, in the absence of the owner, were two or three female servants and an old butler.

"A brisk walk brought me to the hedge surrounding the grounds, which I readily recognized from my informant's description, and, peering over, I could see the house—a fine old place surrounded by stately elms, as near as I could judge in the darkness. An oil lamp at the carriage entrance threw out the only light visible in the immediate neighborhood, and, as if to further aid me, the dark wind-clouds scurrying across the sky made the blackness more profound, while the muttering thunder in the distance gave promise of a storm. Every condition seemed favorable to a



successful termination of my venture.

“‘Just such a night as I could have wished,’ I murmured to myself, and, pulling my hat down so as to somewhat disguise my features, I grasped my valise firmly, and, leaping lightly over the hedge, paused for a further inspection of the place, which showed me that the house was about fifty yards back from the road, and was surrounded by many shrubs and plants.

“I carefully began a circuit of inspection to make sure of leaving no source of danger between me and my base of operations, and it was well I did so, for at the rear I came upon a large dog asleep in front of his kennel. So still did he lie that he might have been taken for a stone image, but his presence was most unwelcome at that particular time and place. He seemed a fine fellow, and I was loath to do so, but I knew it was necessary to deprive him of the means of giving an alarm, so I grasped my jimmy and approached him as noiselessly as a panther. To raise the terrible weapon with both hands and bring it down on his head was the work of an instant. I don’t believe he ever knew what killed him, for the blow caused the heavy bar to crush through his skull, and he uttered not a sound, a convulsive quivering of his body being all that denoted it to have possessed life a moment before.

“Quickly recovering my balance, for I had been well-nigh overthrown by the sudden termination of the stroke, I



hastily withdrew to the protection of a large bush and awaited developments. The wind moaning in the trees about the mansion, coupled with a feeling of repulsion at the deed I had just committed, gave me the 'creevils' (as old nurse was wont to term the uncanny feeling produced on her nerves by anything unnatural in her vicinity), but the fast flying moments warned me to proceed.

"Banishing the uneasiness which had begun to steal into my mind, I crept to the nearest window and peeped in. A chance flash of lightning illuminated the interior, and showed me that I was at a favorable point for entrance, so I inserted the jaw of my jimmy under the sash, the blinds being open, and cautiously forced it upward. Slowly it rose, with a crunching sound, the screws of the old-fashioned catch giving way under the strain, and presently I had an opening wide enough to put my arm through. I waited a few minutes to see if the slight noise had aroused any of the inmates, but, all remaining as silent as before, I raised the window and stealthily entered. My heart thrilled with a new and strange emotion as I realized that I was actually committing an unlawful act, and, feeling the danger of my position if discovered, I panted with excitement till it seemed to my sensitive nerves that I would surely betray my presence. But I grew calmer, and with careful tread began an inspection of the rooms. That in which I stood seemed



to be the library, while beyond was the dining-room, the drawing-room being located on the opposite side of the wide hall, the linen-covered furniture within it standing out in ghostly prominence as the constantly recurring flashes of lightning chased the darkness from the rooms for an instant. Without, the storm was now at its height, and the thunder crashed and rumbled so incessantly that I doubt not I could have upset a table with very little danger of the sound reaching the dull ears of the persons sleeping above. A strong odor of wine pervaded the dining-room, and I saw by the remains of a feast that the servants must have been carousing earlier in the night, and the empty bottles and glasses, soiled table, and generally untidy appearance of everything encouraged me to look for little interruption in my work, as far as the revellers were concerned, and so it proved ; for although I spent an hour or more rummaging the rooms for booty, nothing occurred to cause me any alarm, and I left by the open window, having secured a French clock, several fine *bisque* pieces, which I wrapped in heavy linen napkins from the buffet, some small articles of table silver, and such other things of value as I could stow into my valise without arousing suspicion, and was altogether quite satisfied with the results of my maiden effort.

“I reached my lodgings without attracting attention, though feeling wet and uncomfortable from the still falling



rain, and the next day left town at an early hour, once more attired in my expensive clothes, and not at all a suspicious-looking individual. Arrived at home, and having bathed and attired myself in a lounging suit, I called Elias and instructed him not to permit any one to disturb me, and entered my library, to all intents and purposes with the idea of spending an afternoon with my books.

“I was highly elated at the unbounded success which attended my first adventure, and truly a burglar could not have been more favored had his patron saint arranged his affairs for him. I swung the book-case concealing the secret stairway, and, drawing it into place behind me, descended to the vault. Here I opened one of the small strong boxes and deposited my ill-gotten property, pasting upon the outside of the door a paper bearing the date of the burglary, name of the place, and a brief list of my trophies.

“When I returned to my easy chair, with all traces of my late expedition removed from sight, I gave myself up to keen enjoyment. That I had proved my theory to be correct, and given an exhibition of my skill (perhaps I should say my good fortune), was patent, and I resolved to try again.

“The newspapers of the following morning contained a graphic account of the crime, and announced that a tramp, who had been seen about the place the previous day and could give no satisfac-



tory explanation of his presence, was in custody on suspicion of having committed it. I could not restrain a feeling of fraternal sympathy for the poor wretch, but eased my conscience (for I still had one), with the thought that he was probably where he belonged. One thing that caused me huge delight was the fact that the owner of the house was reported to be a Mr. Scarborough, who I remembered, with a start, was my father's former law partner! The idea was so inexpressibly funny that I was strongly tempted to drop him a line stating that I had knowledge of the thief, who could be persuaded to return the stolen property if assured of immunity from prosecution, but a realization of the embarrassing position in which I should place myself warned me not to attempt it. Dignified old Judge Scarborough! How amazed he would have been to have learned that the son of his old friend had called to see him in his absence, and feloniously abstracted some of his goods and chattels!

"As time passed I added to the property in my vault, choosing as the scenes of my exploits the houses of wealthy persons who were away from home, until six of the boxes were filled and labeled, and the newspapers teemed with reports of mysterious burglaries, no clue to the perpetrators being discovered. I remember the sense of humiliation which weighed down my soul upon reading in one of these accounts: 'The burglar is evidently a novice, as he



took articles of small value, passing over property worth ten times as much as he secured.' I allowed sufficient time to elapse for the occupants of that house to be lulled into a sense of security, then I went and removed the more valuable property that I had overlooked on my first visit. I think those people will be more reticent when talking to press reporters in future.

"Flushed with success, in an evil moment I attempted an entrance into a house in this city and made a signal failure of it. Indeed, I nearly met my Waterloo there, though I managed to escape detection by a fortunate train of circumstances. This led to unusual activity among the local police, and an abandonment of any more attempts in my immediate neighborhood; but to make sure that no suspicion could rest upon me, I thought it necessary to commit a cautious robbery of my own house, by which I *lost* considerable property, the difference between me and my other victims being that *I* knew where to find mine. As a further precaution, I employed a detective to trace the perpetrator of this last impudent theft, but so well had I managed that he was finally compelled to admit himself baffled, though he said he strongly suspected my butler. I could hardly maintain a straight face at this remarkable conclusion of my efforts to hide my tracks, but I managed to conceal my amusement and, with an affected sigh of disappointment, paid the detective's fee, and he



retired, rather crestfallen at his failure.

After his departure I did not make another attempt for several weeks, and, indeed, it was not until ten days ago that I renewed my ill-favored pastime. This last burglary has been the most profitable of all, and box number seven contains property of great value. Among other things, there reposes within it a masterpiece of the jeweler's art in the form of a Swiss watch of priceless worth. I rather pitied the owner for its loss but kept it with the idea that I might be encouraging the jeweler's trade by so doing.

"One by one my ——"

Here the strange narrative of young Marden abruptly terminated, and though I searched for further documents bearing upon his case, I could find no more, so there was nothing to be done but to wait for the return of the inspector, who I thought could probably throw more light on his subsequent history. In the mean time I read the story again and again, with added interest, and found myself hesitating between amazement at the direction taken by the genius of the young fellow and admiration at the skillful way in which he had escaped detection. One thing which puzzled me a good deal was the fact that the inspector had spoken of him as being "unfortunate," whereas, according to his own account, he appeared to have been anything but that. But my musings were brought to an end by the arrival of the old man, who, seeing me still occu-



pied with the manuscript, surmised what I had in mind.

"Well, sir," said he, "what do you think of him?"

"I hardly know," I answered. "It is most disappointing to find the manuscript incomplete. I wish he had finished it instead of stopping so abruptly. Can you tell me anything more about him? You spoke of him as being 'unfortunate'—what did you mean?"

"Certainly, I can tell you what our investigation disclosed, though it was by the merest accident. You will observe that Marden speaks of his dog Mac. Well, the brute was the unwitting cause of his unhappy master's death, and the way it happened was this: those papers which you have in your hand I found scattered about the floor of the vault-room. His statement that the police could find no trace of the person who committed the robberies is quite true, for I was captain of this precinct then, and confess I was never more puzzled and chagrined in my life. One day, when the mysterious crimes were still fresh in the public mind, I was seated at my desk writing, when a note was brought to me by the sergeant on duty. It was evidently written by an illiterate person, or one unaccustomed to handling a pen, and stated that Mr. Ernest Marden had been absent from home for such a long time that it was feared something had happened to him. The note was signed by 'Elias Comerford,' who proved to be the butler of



whom the manuscript speaks. I thought little of the matter then, as mysterious disappearances are quite common occurrences, the missing persons generally turning up all right, and I made up my mind that the same thing was true in this case, especially as I knew young Marden was somewhat eccentric about his traveling. But nothing was heard of him, and at the earnest entreaty of the family servants up at the homestead I sent an agent there to look into the matter. He returned after an absence of two or three hours, wearing a most perplexed look on his face, and asked me to go back with him, as he could not account for the queer actions of young Marden's dog.

"I found Mac stretched out at full length in front of a book-case in the library, growling savagely. At first I supposed him mad, and ordered my assistant to shoot him where he lay, but the old butler pleaded so hard, and seemed so confident that that was not the trouble, that I countermanded the order and tried to coax the dog from his position. I used every means known to me, but without success, and then I noticed that once in a while he would stop growling and sniff under the case, the bottom of which he had gnawed in a dozen places. Now, I knew very well that an intelligent dog would not act that way without cause, assuming that he was not mad, so I fearlessly crossed the room and made a hasty examination. At this



the dog showed every sign of delight, running about me and sniffing in a state of great excitement. I called John, my man, to my assistance, and we exerted our united efforts to move the case, but it would not budge. Then I told him to get something with which to pry it out, and he presently returned with an iron bar, which we inserted in the narrow opening behind it. In response to the pull which we gave, it swung outwardly with a crash, accompanied by the sound of the snapping of the lock, and, to our surprise, moved off to one side without upsetting. Then we saw the stone steps leading to the vault, down which the dog bounded like a flash. I followed him as fast as possible, but quickly repented my rashness, for I came into collision with the door at the foot of the steps. I opened this, but could see nothing in the pitchy darkness of the vault. Calling to John to procure a candle, I retreated to the steps and waited for the light. Meanwhile the dog had entered the vault-room and presently there came from him a howl that made my hair rise on my head in spite of myself. I was mighty glad to get the light which John held, and drawing my revolver, cautiously entered the mysterious chamber. The dog was crouched in front of the vault-door, with his muzzle raised, emitting the most blood-curdling howls.

"I finally succeeded in dislodging him, and opening the door carefully, by means of the combination knob, I beheld



a startling sight. Crouched in a corner, his form almost reduced to a skeleton, was all that remained of Ernest Marden. The knees drawn up to the chin, the clenched hands and terrible appearance of the face, told me the story as plainly as though the dead man was speaking to me in life. By his side we found this ;” and going to a cabinet containing various articles collected in the course of his professional life, the inspector brought me an ordinary linen cuff, on which were still discernible the straggled lines made in the dark by a lead-pencil. They were in the same hand as the manuscript I had just read, and were in truth a message from the dead. With straining sight I read :

*“August 14th, 1887. When this is found I shall be beyond hope of life. While standing before the boxes above me, I heard Mac coming down the steps, and too late it flashed through my mind that I had not drawn the bookcase into place, intending to return at once. The poor fellow could see nothing in the darkness, and before I could prevent it he struck the door of the vault, which was closed behind me. To my horror I find that the jar has thrown the bolts just enough to cause them to catch in the sockets, and I am caught as a rat in a trap. Bitterly do I regret the folly of the past few years of my life, and yet I cannot but acknowledge the justice of my punishment. I desire that if my body is found it shall be buried beside those of my parents; my attorney has instruc-*



tions as to my estate.

*"I am calm now, but it is the calmness of utter despair, for I do not hope for rescue from my strange tomb. I can live but another day in this confined space, and already the weakness of dissolution is stealing upon me. Farewell.*

*"Ernest Marden."*

The terrible document fell from my nerveless hand, and I stared at the inspector in speechless horror. When I recovered myself I managed to gasp : "For Heaven's sake, tell me the end of this fearful tale !"

"There is nothing more to tell beyond the fact that the stolen property was all sent back to the rightful owners by the help of the labels on the boxes. I have always thought poor Marden intended to return it at some time. Certainly he did not need more wealth who was so rich himself."





# THE FLAGELANTE'S SIN.

BY THÉRÈSE M. RANDALL.



FEW years ago I made a tour over the Santa Fé Railroad, and arrived at Albuquerque, the terminus, on the eve of a strange semi-religious spectacle. The Flagelantes

were next day to perform their annual penance with all the picturesque horrors of mediæval fanatics.

The hotel, which now makes a wayfarer's stay in Albuquerque comfortable, was not then built; but we were saved from the miseries of a Mexican inn (which in those days looked much like a tramp's lodging-house) by the hospitality of one of the leading citizens, Signor José Carmigo. He was geniality itself, his wife charming, his home delightful, and his cook deserving a pedestal among the immortals!

As we drove over the narrow zigzag road that led from the town to his hacienda, it looked as sleepy as a cow-path. Later, when we surveyed it from the signor's dwelling, it was alive with a chattering, waiting throng.

The low stone-walls which inclosed the wee, dried-up gardens of the poorer



Mexicans, were soon loaded with a pot-pourri of contrasts.

Black-gowned priests, well-armed ruffians, masters and peons, old age and youth, scrambled for positions on its crumbling top, until its moss-covered sides were hidden beneath a fringe of human legs. Miners of every shade and grade mingled in the crowd—from the hopeful tenderfoot buying his first "outfit" to the long-haired, old prospector. Odd groups and ill-assorted neighbors jostled each other with strange indifference to those explosive things called "feelings," which are bottled up in every breast—to say nothing of the dangerous-looking "guns" (always "on tap" in the Southwest), which gleamed from the generously filled cartridge-belt in ostentatious profusion.

The sun blazed with furious energy. The ladies, beneath their parasols, lost the freshness of toilet and complexion which had distinguished them from their poorer Mexican sisters. The latter, crouching on the ground against any convenient back-rest, hid their unlovely youth or wrinkled maturity under their disfiguring black shawls. Even the Indians began to look wilted in the scorching sun.

The one zephyr which was abroad that day played around our hacienda, and the thick foliage of the fruit-trees sifted the sun's rays through their leafy coolness—yet our thermometer registered 110° in the shade!

Suddenly, that mysterious thrill



which, in a watching throng, trembles in every soul at the same instant, flashed upon us.

With a common impulse we drew our chairs up to the edge of the veranda, and saw—above the surging heads of the spectators—the white and lustrous banners of the approaching procession.

With an irresistible fascination we gazed on what we had never seen before—and never would wish to see again.

The Flagelantes staggered toward us over the hot, shadeless road. Bloody footprints marked their way, and their naked feet were swollen and blistered by the long march in the burning sand of this half desert land.

The sound of lashes—falling on nearly naked bodies—made a weird accompaniment to the moans of the female spectators, the tearful calls to “*Santa Maria,*” and an occasional shriek of wild hysterics from some over wrought woman.

A girl near us fainted as there passed before her one fanatic with a heavy crucifix—at least eight feet long—tied to his bare back by cruelly cutting cords. Stumbling along under this weight, he still had enough energy to flagellate his legs with a many-tailed whip of thorny cactus.

For miles, under that blazing sun, some of the miserable creatures dragged their aching feet—tied so close together that they could barely put one beyond the other. Others bore the tor-



ture of the hair shirt, the savage points of which were driven at every movement into the bleeding pores. But no matter what the form of torture the zealots endured, the monotonous "thlash," "thlash" of the whip was a maddening concerto.

Some of them wore a breech-cloth only—unless the blood that painted them could be called covering—and a cowl drawn over their heads.

Others, clad in thin cotton trousers, concealed their features under a muslin bag, through holes in which respiration was made possible, and sight was unrestricted.

A few were so indifferent as to scorn concealment, and crawled along with their heads uncovered—their tangled locks hanging over their pallid, unveiled faces.

Nearly opposite us was the little adobe chapel where the exhausted penitents ended their pilgrimage.

As they reached its portal the scene became more dramatic, for here they applied their horrible lashes with renewed vigor ere dragging themselves within to fall before the altar "purified."

While the last of the seventy-four Flagelantes slowly staggered along the sandy road, we arose and followed our host to the little chapel.

We had reached its door and stood back in pity to allow the last weary straggler to pass in before us. But, as he attempted to mount the one entrance step he tottered, swayed for a moment,



and as we rushed forward to stay him—fell.

We thought him dead, but when we drew the cowl from his face and removed a block of wood from his mouth (he had gagged himself so that no cry might escape), a faint breath fluttered through his pallid lips. We carried him tenderly into the cool house, and stripping him, saw that he wore the cruel "hair shirt," while around his ankles, tightly drawn into the flesh, were bound strong cords. We gently unwound them, but they left ridges of swollen flesh, while the feet, tied together, were full of the cactus thorns with which the poor fanatic had lashed himself.

We were so absorbed in our own Flagelante that we thought no more of the miserable sufferers in the little adobe church, where, lying in abasement before the altar, they prayed for release in a future world, from the consequences of their earthly sins.

When night's concealing shadows crept over the face of the earth the penitents stole away in silence and mystery, unknown, perhaps, even to each other; for they had come among strangers to perform this self-inflicted penance.

Next evening we were seated close to the house in the square *patio*, which is to be found in the center of nearly every comfortable Mexican dwelling.

We—that is, the gentlemen of our party—were quietly enjoying the brilliant moonlight, the gentle splash, splash of the fountain, the scent of flowers and



our host's fine cigars.

The ladies were standing in the center of the *patio* trying the strength of the moon's clear light by attempting to read.

We fell to discussing the strange ceremony of the day before, and asked our host many questions.

"Some of these men may be murderers, others thieves, and indeed they represent every class of sinners even to the many-times assassin," Signor Carmigo was saying as the ladies joined us :

"Of what crime do you think our Flagelante was guilty?"

"Oh, what if he were a murderer!" said one of the guests.

"A murderer?" our hostess scornfully replied. "Never! that man is a saint, rather."

Loyal hospitality is a Mexican virtue, and Signora Carmigo defended her stranger-guest as a sacred duty.

"Did you not notice," she went on vehemently, "the expression of his face? Ah! it beams with holy"—

Her sentence was finished, not by words, but by eloquent blushes; for, standing in the open window of his room (which, like all the others, led into the square *patio*) was the tall figure of the Flagelante.

"I will myself answer your question, signora," he said, in good English, bowing gracefully to our little American. "I owe some explanation to my hostess, and that you may be relieved from any nervous dread, and feel that you have not lavished so much kindness on a



murderer, I will tell you the story of my sin."

There was a little rustle, and then silent expectation, as we finished settling ourselves into attitudes of keen attention.

"I beg you not to tire yourself," said Signora Carmigo, going to his side. "You are weak and feverish, and should keep quiet for some time yet. We were most indiscreet to discuss your affairs, but you will try to forgive us, I know, and pray return to your room."

"Not for me is rest, signora, until I am again admitted to the community from which my sin has driven me forth an outcast," he replied, with a gentle smile, leading our hostess to her seat, and bowing with charming grace as he courteously waved her to be seated.

It seemed impossible to resist him, and Signora Carmigo quietly complied.

He then glanced around our little group, and, seeing everyone seated, accepted the chair which our host indicated, and began his story:—

Like so many Mexican boys of good family, I was sent to a college in St. Louis to be educated.

While there I formed a close friendship with a young fellow of brilliant promise, and we became, not like brothers so much as like one soul with two bodies, having but one will, one impulse.

On leaving college we chose the same profession—that of medicine—but we



never gained our diplomas ; for did I not say we had but one soul? We fell in love—and with the same woman.

Then a sort of madness seemed to come over me. My studies were neglected, and I could do naught but dream of her—and jealously dread my friend, so fascinating, so noble.

One day I met him outside the hotel where we boarded, in the act of dispatching a messenger with a bouquet of roses to the girl we both loved.

I made some angry remark, as we entered the hotel together, and before I could realize what had happened, we had quarreled bitterly, and the quarrel ended in a challenge.

We fought and my friend fell.

When I saw him lying white and still upon the grass, with the blood from his wound staining his breast, I flung myself beside him ; but was torn away by my second, who drove me at once from the scene.

Then, feeling myself branded another Cain, I fled to my parents. Happily for me, I was not a murderer, for I learned that my friend lived—and then I heard no more.

I feared to hear of his marriage. I tried to drown memory in drink and dissipation—then I became melancholy, and finally turned to religion for peace.

To please my mother, who was heart-broken over the wreck I seemed ready to become, I retired to a monastery, and made what is called a retreat—a time spent in solitude, meditation and prayer.



It ended in my becoming a monk.

Oh ! how I prayed for strength—that moral strength in which woman, who seems but a tender flower physically, is so rich, and man so poor.

Here was I, a young giant, fit to be a modern gladiator in feats which owed success to muscular power, cowering like a child before my own moral weakness.

I could not subdue my turbulent heart—rebellling against solitude and craving love.

I was powerless to banish the beautiful face which forever haunted me. It transformed the walls of my cell into mirrors which reflected over and over again her glowing youth and tempting loveliness. It followed me everywhere, even to my devotions.

But at last a calm came to my soul. My constant prayers to our holy Mother were answered. I began to know the peace which must follow in the wake of such a life as the dim, shadowed cloister holds for its dwellers. Ah, signora, so far from being an assassin, I *was* almost a saint.

One morning, while walking with some of my brothers to our work in the vegetable gardens, I saw approaching up the steep side of the mountain a man seated on a *burro*. He was from a more cultivated civilization than ours. His hat, his clothes were not those of the only people we ever saw—the miners below us, or the Mexican herders.

But as he drew nearer, and finally ad-



dressed us, I cried aloud in my excitement. It was my friend—my other self.

He clasped my hand with loving fervor, and I saw that all was forgiven.

“And how did you find me in this isolated spot?” I asked.

“Easy enough. I longed to see you again, so wrote to your parents—and, behold! I am here.”

Our superior greeted him hospitably, as, indeed, we do all wayfarers—though he was especially gracious to my friend. Our kind father had from the first shown a particular interest in me. I suppose he pitied me because of my sinful life—which, of course, I had confessed to him when I entered the novitiate.

As days went by the old fondness for my friend returned with new force, and I weakly dreaded the hour of his departure.

What, then, was my joy—for he hinted not of his intention to me—when, meeting our superior one evening alone, at the entrance to the chapel, he fell on his knees—this elegant man of the world—and begged admittance to our order.

“Here is the peace, the tranquil rest, which the world cannot give,” said he, humbly.

“But, are you not married?” I stammered at last; for a delicacy I could not overcome had forbidden me to mention her in all our talks of old times. And he, it would seem, felt the same



restraint, for never once did he in any way refer to her.

"Married?" he echoed. "What made you think that? Certainly I am not."

"Nothing—only—oh, well, I thought perhaps you might be," I faltered.

I said no more, thinking the subject a painful one; but I was convinced that he had been rejected, and, like myself, was disgusted with the world.

It seemed quite natural to see my friend dressed in the habit of our order. We were now again brothers in heart and profession.

During the last week in May—a month devoted to our Blessed Lady—I was to take the last serious vows of our order.

On the same day, my friend, whom we now called Brother Francis, was to enter the novitiate, which was really the first step into the monastic life.

He had drawn a large sum of money from his agents at home, part of which he used in building a chapel to our Lady in a natural grotto near the monastery.

Here we were to go through the solemn ceremony to which we looked forward with such eagerness.

A few days before its arrival, I, who was the assistant organist, had to go to this little chapel to rehearse with the choir the music for the ceremony.

I was playing a favorite voluntary while awaiting their appearance, when I became conscious of another presence.



I looked around, and saw a boy gazing at me with mournful eyes.

"How came you here?" said I, in surprise, for visitors were rare at our lonely mountain retreat.

A flood of tears was his only answer.

"Come, come," said I, kindly, "what can I do for you—what do you seek?" As I laid my hand on his shoulder he shrank away. Falling on his knees, he cried, while the tears almost choked back the words, "Ah, I know not what to call you, as I see you in that strange dress, but your face has not changed. Your generous heart, I know, is the same; and perhaps—perhaps, so is the love which they tell me you once had for me. I am no boy. Do you not recognize me? Oh, Felipe, do you not remember Edith, for love of whom you challenged and wounded your friend? Ah, I am she—his wife now, and a heart-broken woman. In this disguise I have sought your help. Oh, surely, surely you can not turn me away!"

I was so amazed that speech deserted me. Ah, yes, only too well did I recognize that voice which again called me "Felipe."

"How," I stammered at last—"how can he be your husband? Would you have me believe my friend a villain!—for he is here preparing to enter this holy life. Could he, who was ever so frank, so generous, so truly noble, desert his wife and deceive us? Impossible!"

"But listen," she sobbed, "he thinks himself free. He is mad on this sub-



ject. Since he was hurt in a railroad accident, nearly a year ago, he has forgotten me completely. You have been his one thought. On his recovery he wandered off, I suppose, to find you—and he has never looked upon the face of his little child.”

She clung to my feet while she sobbed out these words, and her tears maddened me.

I was filled with a fierce desire to snatch her in my arms and flee down the mountain side.

I forgot everything but that she whom I loved, aye, ten times more madly than ever, was there at my feet—alone.

But the sound of voices approaching startled her. She arose and sprang behind the little altar of the Blessed Virgin, saying, “Seek me here,” as she disappeared.

A moment later the choir entered the chapel, but I heeded them not. Dazed, enraptured, I stood gazing at the altar, which hid the object of my passion.

“Brother Ambrose! Brother Ambrose!” they called in reverent whispers. I answered not, for I was lifted away from them. Their voices sounded far and strange; and besides I had forgotten my name in religion since she had called me “Felipe.” “Brother Ambrose,” they repeated, “why is it you gaze so fixedly at our Lady’s altar?”

“Come and prove to me that thou art really here,” I cried, approaching the little altar with outstretched hands, as I



began to doubt the reality of what I had seen. Come, oh beautiful one, and tell me that thou art more than an ecstatic vision—a glimpse of the heaven beyond."

The brothers drew back, and silently stole from the chapel.

I peered behind the altar, still doubting her presence there; I entered the space allowed between it and the wall for the attendants to dress it from behind. I could see nothing in the dim light which came from the one stained window above.

Suddenly she emerged from under the little altar.

There she told me that, when she learned from her husband's agents, who for months had lost trace of him, he was with us and about to become a monk; she left her young babe and started to find him.

At the mining town below she had learned that no woman was allowed to enter our monastery. "I also heard that the monks were blindly superstitious, and that if they avoided women they at least loved the Mother of Christ. I was determined to come, so procured a miner's outfit, and mounted on a *burro*, followed the trail up the mountain side," she said.

The chapel in the grotto being secluded, she had crept in there and hidden under this altar, which was partly open at the rear.

She had a plan to get her husband back—would, oh, would I help her?



My brain whirled, I was mad with excitement. I rushed from her and casting myself before the altar, fought with the demon within me.

When I returned to her side I was trembling, but calmer.

"Shall I bring your husband to you? Is it this you would have me do?" I asked.

"Useless, useless!" she cried bitterly. "He forgets me. This strange malady shows itself only where I am concerned. Could I get him to come home of his own will, the doctors think that in time he would awaken and remember all."

"Some gentle shock might hasten the cure," said I, as in a dream. Then, as if encouraged, she unfolded her plan.

The Angelus rang out its sweet notes, which said so plainly, "Peace, peace, purity brings peace," as I gave my sacred word to the woman I loved to help win back her husband.

At dinner my pallid face and silent manner caused many whispered inquiries as to my health, but especially anxious looked Brother Francis.

"He has seen a vision," was the murmur that seemed to hum through the monastery, like the droning of wee insects in June. It reached our superior's ears; calling me to his side he questioned me.

"Our brothers tell me that thou wert found in an ecstasy, gazing at our Lady's statue in the chapel of the grotto. Dids't thou then see a vision, as they say, my son?"



I longed to throw myself at his feet and confess all; but I dared not, for well did I know that he above all others would be horrified at a woman's presence in our midst; and must surely have sent her from our grounds—branding her as an adventuress.

For what proof could she give him that her story was true?

As I thought of this and my promise to her, I took courage and lied.

When, with his hand laid on my head in blessing, he asked me to describe the vision, I fell down in a passion of shame and cried:

"Oh, father, I cannot, I cannot! Spare me this ordeal; else I shall not have the boldness to ask of thee the favor I would crave."

"Poor boy, the wondrous grace shown thee has excited thee to incoherency. Oh, thrice blessed child of our Lady, thy youthful eyes have seen a glimpse of heaven! What favor can I, a weak and erring son of man, refuse to thee? Ask, that I may be honored by the granting."

Oh, agony of shame which made my tongue refuse to speak! But, as the blood rushed back and forth in hot flushes to my face, I thought again of her, and love once more made me bold.

"I would beg of thee, my father, that I may take the sacristan's place, and alone decorate the chapel in the grotto," I at length dared say.

"Go, my son, beautify our Lady's shrine. Thy request is granted. Remain there if thou wilt. In thy com-



munings with our holy Mother, do not forget to intercede for me—so prone, alas, to earthly failings.”

And our sainted father blessed me—a vile hypocrite I again felt myself to be.

I rushed back to the chapel and began my work.

I nailed a tall frame to the back of the altar, and from this draped two long curtains, which fell together in full folds. Then I brought from the sacristy the finest of the priests' filmy lace robes.

These I hung behind the altar, placed the step-ladder against its back, and my work was done. To hover somewhere near was all that remained for me to do.

I felt secure, since I had obtained permission to take charge of the sacristy. No one would need to enter it now but myself, and the rear of the little altar was safe.

The monks spent much of the next day praying before our Lady's statue in the little chapel, which they so firmly believed had been glorified by a heavenly visitation.

“'Tis not strange that our holy Mother should love one so saintly as thou,” said our oldest brother to me, as he passed me at the chapel door; “but 'tis not for me to see her wondrous glory, for still am I of the flesh—defiled by sin”—and with humble reverence he gazed on my face

One by one the monks passed out in answer to the bell calling the monastery to Vesper. Brother Francis was the last to come down the aisle.



“Stay, dear brother,” I said, drawing him to my side. “Our father has granted us permission—since we are so soon to take our vows in this spot—to stay away from Vesper, and say the litany here before the altar of our Lady.”

The chapel was deserted by all but us.

While with rapt expression Brother Francis gazed into the marble face of our Lady’s statue, I lit the candles till they glimmered like a score of golden stars. Then I began the litany of the Blessed Virgin, Brother Francis giving the response, “Ora pro nobis,” in his fervent musical bass.

When we had finished my companion remained kneeling, his eyes turned upwards, his hands outstretched pleadingly. But while he gazed, he was amazed to see the curtains at the back of the altar part, and lo! before his wonder-dilated eyes, was “the vision.”

And oh, such a blushing, bright-eyed vision! Over the beautiful face hung in soft folds, which reached to the little bare feet, a filmy veil, and crowning the head of loose golden hair was a wreath of fragrant lilies.

Brother Francis gazed spell-bound; unable to speak he still held his hands out pleadingly.

“Brother Francis, Brother Francis,” spake the vision, in low tremulous accents, “why art thou here in New Mexico, when thy place is in the battle of a great city? Not for thee is the cloister’s silence. Go forth from this holy spot, and return to the haunts of other days.



Go seek thy home, and expect not God's blessing until thou hast done this."

There was silence in the chapel—the curtains fell together—the vision gone.

Then arose the sound of passionate sobbing; Brother Francis weeping at the sacrifice of his vocation, and I deploring my love.

Side by side at the altar steps we laid till exhausted with emotion my brother stole away.

And now came the most bitter act of all—I must help my love to flee from discovery—and from myself!

She was eager to be gone, so I stole to the corral where her *burro* was unnoticed among our own beasts, and brought him to the chapel door.

In the darkness I helped her to mount, and walked down the mountain side, as her guide, to the mining camp.

Here a servant awaited her—she was safe; while I—ah, who but he who has experienced the scorching of a blasted passion can tell what I suffered?

With her tears still warm on my hands—where her kisses thrilled them—I turned and fled in the darkness to my lonely cell.

Our simple and pious superior bade farewell to Brother Francis with many regrets; but I could not wish him god-speed while my heart cursed him as the cause of my despair.

At last arrived the day on which I was to take my vows—and with it came calm to my tempted soul, and strength to repent. I sought our su-



perior's cell and begged admission ere the bell for matins rang.

Before he could speak I fell at his feet in the dim light and confessed all. "This was the day on which I was to take my vows. Oh, reverend father, not until thou shalt consider my penance complete, can I now speak those holy words!" Thus I finished the story of how I had arranged the altar, and helped my love, arrayed in the priests' consecrated lace robes, to pose as our Blessed Lady.

"A sacrilege! a sacrilege!" cried my superior; "the holy garments of the clergy—even the blest altar—used in a trick to deceive, and a woman admitted almost into our cloister! Oh, wretched boy, whose lips were thick with falsehoods to thy superior, who decorates the very altar, who cheats his brothers, who harbors unholy passions, who parodies even the Mother of our Redeemer, thy penance must be public;" and he summoned the community with a loud peal of the bell.

Prone on the stone floor I still lay, as the monks hurried forward and solemnly circled around me.

Many were the murmurs of incredulity and horror as our father excitedly repeated my story.

"Say, brothers, what shall be the judgment on this wretched boy?" Thrice he repeated this question, the silence only broken by deep sighs.

Ah, they loved young Brother Ambrose too well. My heart accused me



more painfully as I felt the sting of their affection.

I sprang to my feet, and falling on my bended knees beside our superior, cried vehemently.

"Let *me* pass sentence. I alone hate the culprit. Let him go forth an out-cast, wandering barefoot, and begging from door to door for a year. When at the end of that time the Flagelantes perform their annual pilgrimage, let him join them; and may the blessed Mother whom he has insulted look down on him with forgiveness ere he returns."

"Go," said our superior, turning away with tear-dimmed eyes. Since then I have not beheld him.

There was deep silence as the Flagelante ceased speaking.

Our host was the first to break the spell by saying.

"Ah, you return now to take your vows; freed from your sense of guilt, you can now do so."

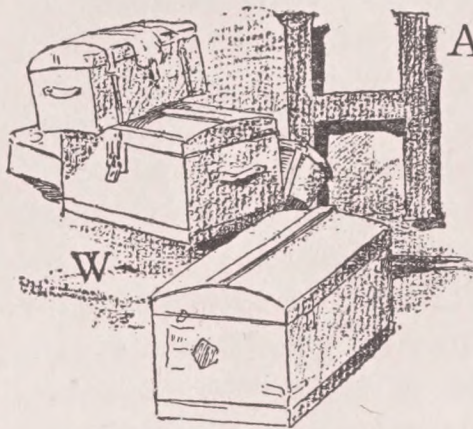
But the Flagelante heard not—he had vanished, melting like a shadow into the gloom of approaching dawn.





# THE LETTER OF CREDIT.

BY CHARLES C. NOTT, JR.



AD I lost it?  
That was the question which was perplexing me. I was sitting in room 69 of the Schweizerhof at Lucerne. I had just added

somewhat to the already large balance due the proprietors of the Schweizerhof on my account by partaking of a generous dinner. My ready cash, reduced to some fifteen francs, made me realize that on the morrow a draft on my letter of credit would be imperative. On rummaging in my trunks where my fingers had expected to grasp the reassuring letter, they closed upon the vague and empty air! With gasping breath I dived again into the dim recesses of my trunk. Its contents were undisturbed, and showed the neatness and order of which I am so justly proud; but nowhere did the bright-green folds of my letter appear. It was at this point that I might have been seen sitting or rather collapsing on a pudgy German mattress, gazing into vacancy.

As I sat thus stupefied, little "side shows" of thought, so to speak, were interspersed. I remembered that the French bankers at Dijon, when I had last used my letter, had returned it to



me addressed to "Sir John Smith." This had touched my republican vanity, and I had shown it in a careless manner to my friend, J. Holmley Bunker, as an indication of the impression made by me on the average European. Bunker's utmost anglomaniacal yearnings had never caused him to be taken for a Briton, save on one occasion when a tourist of the Cook excursion variety had mistaken him for the head cook of his party. I did not like Bunker and thought he was trying to dislike me. For the last six months he had furnished a living example of what a self-assertive manner, even if somewhat vulgar, when coupled with a copious revenue, can do with the nicest and most fastidious of girls. But this is obiter. To return to my financial situation.

When at length I had recovered self-possession, I began to consider how the theft could have occurred. Two days ago I had gone on an excursion to the Rigi. I had left my room and trunk both locked, and had found both in the same condition on my return. I had then strolled out, leaving them unlocked, to get the sunset on the lake. The loss must have happened then, or while I was at dinner. When this realization dawned upon me I rushed from the room to telegraph my bankers. As I hurried around the corner I violently collided with a young lady, who was just coming up from the *salle à manger*. I muttered an apology, and did not no-



tice who it was until I heard Bunker saying :

“Oh, he probably forgot his dessert, and 's afraid there won't be any left when he gets back again.”

Not heeding him, I went at once to the telegraph office, where the grasping nature of the officials soon exhausted all save one franc of my depleted treasury.

Owing to the dimensions of my bill, I felt a certain delicacy in mentioning to the officials of the hotel the exact nature of my loss, but simply said that my trunk had been robbed. To the police, however, I gave a full account of the affair, and was treated by those lynx-eyed guardians of the law as if they rather suspected that I was an impostor. They promised, of course, to put the whole vast machinery of the Swiss detective force in motion ; took my name, age, address and photograph, implying that, at any rate, they were sure of getting me again, and sent me forth wondering what touch of nature makes the world's police force kin. I returned to the hotel, bestowed my last franc with a magnificent air upon a wondering menial and retired to rest, relieved of the last trace of filthy lucre, yet not in the placid state of mind supposed to attend its absence.

The next morning dawned fresh and clear, and I arose in very good spirits, forgetting for the moment my penniless condition. I always enjoyed breakfast at the Schweizerhof, firstly because I sat with Mrs. Wildray's party (which



consisted of herself, her daughter and Colonel Smiler, an elder brother of Mrs. Wildray's, a wary, aged and crabbed bachelor), and, secondly, because Bunkers' plebeian tastes usually led him to breakfast at an earlier hour than the rest of us ; so we were spared his company, although he seldom failed to intrude on us at all other meals and places. Ever since he had worked himself into Mrs. Wildray's good graces, and his intentions toward Miss Wildray had become evident to me, it had been the aim of my existence to prevent him from having her to himself.

This morning I found the Wildrays and Colonel Smiler already at breakfast. Mrs. Wildray was lamenting, in her quasi-English accent, that her daughter was getting her into such late breakfast hours. The colonel was, as usual, engaged in his great life-work of grumbling at the breakfast and things in general, and I suspected from the slight approach to cordiality which he put into his salutation, and from the mother's intensely unconscious air, that I had just been coming in for a share of his snarling.

Miss Wildray alone looked fresh and happy. "I am glad to see that you are not in such haste to eat, drink and be merry as you were last night, Mr. Smith," she said.

This put me in mind in the same breath of my loss of the evening before, and of Bunker's impertinent explanation of my haste, and I replied with some



dignity that Mr. Bunker was so evidently and exclusively occupied with the pleasures of gastronomic retrospection that he imputed the same to me.

Mrs. Wildray at once took occasion to launch forth into a laudatory history of Bunker's ancestry and family, which was only interesting from the fact that no one else had ever discovered them. The colonel, being thoroughly familiar with the thread of his sister's discourse, saw fit to cut it short by bursting into open and violent execrations at the longevity attained by sundry eggs which dotted his plate. As I regarded the colonel in the light of a possible lender, I concurred heartily in the spirit, if not the letter, of his imprecations. This shrewd stroke had hardly been executed, when a shadow fell over my shoulder and Bunker stood before us. "Bong joor, ladies! Mornin', colonel! H'are yer, Smith!" he said in his impertinent familiar way. "Too bad, Miss Wildray, I can't recommend you to go to the uncle, thou sluggard, as he seems *in pari delictu*, as we lawyers say—heh, Smith! Sorry you're all so late, as I've been arranging for a day's drive over to Interlachen. Thought you'd like to go there once over the Brunig. We can spend the night, and come back by rail or not, as we please."

These words fell upon me like a chill. I could not travel without money, and to get money I must either borrow from the colonel or from Bunker. As I had no liking for the former, who never lost



an opportunity to bestow an extra piece of surliness upon me, I disliked very much to ask him for a loan ; while nothing short of the entire certainty of seeing Miss Wildray depart on an excursion which Bunker would, and I should not grace, would force me to the humiliation of craving a favor of him. I was therefore about to raise my voice in a feeble protest, when the matter was settled by Mrs. Wildray's saying that only an early riser could have conceived such a delightful scheme (which remark was accompanied by a sarcastic glance at me), and for a wonder the colonel fell in with his sister's plan, probably because he had fallen out with his breakfast.

Bunker said the carriage would be around in half an hour. The ladies gave the startled little screams which the prospect of having to be ready in so short a time invariably evokes ; the colonel invoked eternal punishment upon the eyes of our future driver, whom he foreknew to be of alcoholic tendencies, and the party broke up.

A few minutes later I beheld the colonel coming up the stairs, and considering him as the lesser evil, I advanced boldly to obtain some slight financial assistance. He was scowling and breathing hard, and before I was within ten yards of him he began :

"Do you know that whelp, Greggs ? Here he's had the cursed impudence to send me toiling up to my room after money to lend him. Yes, sir ! If there's



a man I despise it's the man who goes around presuming, on a slight acquaintance, to strike his betters for a loan ! It shows a man's a blackleg, sir, or else a driveling, short-sighted idiot who can't contrive to keep ten dollars ahead of his needs ! I'm going to give him his dirty hundred francs" (this was the exact amount for which I had intended to apply), "and then tell him he is welcome to it if he will keep his confounded, slovenly habits out of my way."

I whistled softly, and considered that rarely was lender in this humor wooed, and still more rarely won, and went downstairs. There I found Bunker smoking a cigar and puttering around an open barouche, the mind and matter of whose motive-power consisted of a bucolic driver and two spavined horses.

After a mighty effort to put my mental-digestive apparatus in a receptive state for the impending dose of humblepie, I approached Bunker. He seemed unwilling to catch my eye, and, incredible as it seemed, somewhat embarrassed. I plunged boldly in, however, and told him of my loss.

"Lost your letter of credit !" said he, as he arose, looking red and flustered by his exertions over the chain. "Had your pockets picked, or has the Helvetian bunco-steerer found a ready victim ?"

"No," said I, "I unlocked my trunk last night and found the letter gone, and I haven't a sou left. I have tele-



graphed to my bankers, and expect to hear from them to-morrow or next day, and—er—could you let me have a hundred francs till then? I wouldn't trouble you, but, as I say, I literally haven't a cent to my name."

"I declare, Smith, I don't see how I can, really. I'm down to bed-rock myself. Very sorry to appear disobliging, but I'll have to wire for funds myself from Interlachen."

"This is devilish awkward for me. I really don't see how I can go to Interlachen. I can't pay my hotel bill there, or here, either, for that matter."

"Sorry, 'm sure; I wish I could help you," and he again devoted himself to the axle.

In spite of my by no means high opinion of him, I confess I was much surprised, as he was always so unpleasantly careful in money matters.

"The low-lived beggar is going to get rid of me at last," thought I; and in the midst of my reflections Miss Wildray appeared in the doorway, looking very handsome in her dark, closely fitting traveling dress.

"Well, Mr. Smith," she said gayly, "I've been watching you and Mr. Bunker out of my window, and will you please explain to me what is the subtle attraction in that simple chain?"

"Oh!" said I, "Bunker was naturally alarmed when he found that I shouldn't be along to take care of him, and has been testing every inch of your conveyance ever since."



"What! aren't you coming?" she said, giving me a startled look.

"No; at the last moment I've been prevented," I replied significantly.

She looked at me inquiringly, as if expecting a further explanation, but I offered none, and the pause was waxing awkward, when Mrs. Wildray rustled down the stairs, at once imparting an air of bustling worldliness to the entire courtyard.

"Well, Mr. Smith," she remarked pertly, "you remind me of a pelican in the wilderness rather more than anything I ever saw in my life. Have you lost your last friend or your first love?"

"Neither of those occurrences is a circumstance to my misfortune. I am to be deprived of the pleasure of your company," said I, sarcastically.

"Indeed! I commiserate with you. Charles!" (To the colonel.) "Charles, have you all the shawls?"

"Come, come, Smith; don't keep us waiting! You know you're really going, and if not, why not?" said the colonel.

"I dislike to crowd your party," said I, loftily. "I see there are only seats for four in the carriage."

"Nonsense, Smith," interposed Bunker, who was helping Mrs. Wildray in. "You can sit inside, and I'll ride with the driver," and he grinned sardonically.

"Thanks," I answered; "but I won't incommode you to that extent. You might be taken for another of Cook's cicerones, you know."



Bunker reddened. Mrs. Wildray stared at me without winking, and the colonel laughed, on principle, the remark being of a disagreeable character. While the others were stowing away their wraps, and I was tucking the robes about Miss Wildray, "I didn't think you would do this ; you know you were in the party," she said in a low, icy tone.

I was stammering out some incoherent but ardent avowal, when the rustic on the box gave his spavined team a severe lash; the heavy hind wheel rolled perilously near the end of my foot, and the carriage disappeared with Bunker's ruddy head wagging triumphantly beside Miss Wildray's brown curls.

The position of a man who sees the girl he loves drive off with a designing mother and a rich rival who has purposely excluded him from the party, is not a pleasant one. I looked forward with dismay to the slow-fire of restlessness, doubt and curiosity which must burn for at least thirty-six hours before the return of the quartet would settle my doubts and fears.

My impatience steadily increased with the day, and I passed a sleepless night. Several hours before the party could be expected to put in an appearance next day, I dressed with "studied negligence" and began to hover around the office and courtyard; but the warm, clean light of afternoon gradually softened and flushed over the distant mountain peaks and changed them into glowing pinnacles of rose and crimson ; the pla-



cid colorlessness of the lake burned, and flamed and flashed as the sun's great red disk dropped behind the deep blue haze of the western hills, and twilight filtered down through the leafy canopy of the broad streets, absorbing the sunset colors and changing them to quiet, tender hues until, at last, the twin spires of the quaint old Hof Kirche stood out sharp and black against the last faint glimmer of the day, and still my nymph, who was the embodiment to me of all rich, sunset beauties, came not. When the last chance arrival was a thing of the past I crept off to my fevered pillow.

The next morning I found a letter awaiting me ; it was post-marked Inter-lachen, and addressed in a bold, aggressive hand. To my stupefied amazement, the first document I removed from the envelope was my letter of credit ! There were also some fifty-franc notes and a letter. The letter was from Mr. J. Holmley Bunker and conveyed the following : " Business first, contrition second, pleasure third ; therefore, first, would I please cause his baggage and that of Mrs. Wildray's party to be sent at once to Geneva, and would I pay his and Mrs. Wildray's party's bill, for which funds were inclosed ? Second, contrition ; would I therefore please excuse the slight liberty he had taken in removing my letter of credit the day we returned from the Rigi ? Wasn't needed to swell his finances, but was to remove well-meaning third party ; had heard me



say I was 'strapped' and so, as a last resort, 'coopered' my funds and proposed the Bruning in order to subsequently propose matrimony; would 'ante up' three days' interest for use of said funds if that would help soothe injured feelings. Third, pleasure; your congratulations, old boy! I am appearing in my great rôle of the happy man with Dora as prima donna. All congratulations may be sent, postage prepaid, to the care of D—— & Co., Bankers, Paris."

I crushed the letter in my hand, cursing the day I was born, the numerous days I had lived, and that day, above all others, on which I met and loved Dora Wildray.

\* \* \* \*

Four months later I was standing on the deck of the mail-packet steaming down Queenstown harbor to the leviathan which was to bear me to my native land. From my past experience, I rather expected that after embarking I should be confined strictly to the cabin, and I cast a wistful look at the green shores almost stretching hands across the mouth of the harbor; but I felt a thrill of pleasure. I was going home! Farewell to Europe and sentiment! Back to America, and the keen, invigorating atmosphere of work. Before I had found a place for everything and put everything in its place the pulsations of the engine began, and we glided out of the harbor. Just as I was determining on my costume for the deck, we emerged



from the last protecting promontory. The wind whistled and bellowed overhead ; the floor of my stateroom heaved and fell, and my courage fell with it ; the walls rocked and swayed, and cries of "Steward !" resounded through the dim corridors. I hesitated, thought of my tossing deckward path and the pantry to be passed with all its olfactory possibilities in full blast, and, hesitating, was lost. I stretched myself upon my berth and closed my eyes.

During the next five days when I was not in a comatose condition, as a rule, I devoutly wished I were.

But on the fifth day a change came over me. The subtle spirit seemed to be slowly, faintly returning, and in the afternoon I arose, and with many pauses and relapses, staggered along the passage, and finally stuck my ghastly face out upon deck. The blurred horizon was fast closing in, and under the falling darkness the sea was slate-colored. Great spray clouds swept aft whenever the bow plunged down from one roller into the next, but the air put new life into me. I lurched along the deck past a few shapeless shapes stretched in steamer chairs and enswathed in rugs, and around a corner into the lee of the stern deck-cabin. For a wonder, there was no one there, and I settled myself with great satisfaction in the chair of some poor wretch still groaning below. Scarcely had I done so when the ship gave a tremendous roll, and a young lady shot around the corner, made a wild,



despairing clutch at my chair, and would have been hurled across the deck against the rail if I had not sprung up and seized her. At the same instant the ship righted, and I found my arms encircling the ulster, and my astonished eyes gazing into the no less astonished countenance of the bride of Mr. J. Holmley Bunker.

My supporting arms were most suddenly unclasped, and, drawing back, I removed my cap and bowed with all the dignity I could muster. My bow was returned with equal hauteur and a very chilling "How do you do, Mr. Smith?"

"How do you do, Mrs. Bunker?" I replied politely, "and how is your husband and Mrs. Wildray?"

She looked bewildered, and then a light flashed over her face, and sinking into the steamer chair, she covered her face with her hands and laughed till she cried. She looked so lovely with her blowing hair and cold red cheeks that a sudden renewed sense of my loss came over me and I lost my temper.

"Mrs. Bunker," said I, "I am rejoiced that the health of your husband and mother opens such a pleasing vista to you. From your mode of manifesting sympathy, I should presume they are both seasick." I executed a frigid bow and was turning to go, when she suddenly became serious.

"Oh, Mr. Smith! I hope you are not very much enraged by that loss of your letter of credit at Lucerne. I told Mr.



Bunker that it was very impertinent, not to say criminal, and he promised to apologize humbly. He wrote to you, did he not?"

"Yes; he wrote," I replied dryly, "though I can't say that I was struck by the depth of his humiliation."

"Why, what an outrage! What did he say?" she asked with a most innocent look.

"He stated that he 'coopered' my letter of credit (to use his own phrase) to get rid of me, and then almost in the same connection asked for my congratulations on his engagement; though why he thought my absence connected with that blissful consummation I'm at a loss to imagine."

I said this in a bold voice, but I felt that I must present a hang-dog look, and I could not meet her eye.

"Oh, that's very plain!" she replied. "because you rather monopolized me; and mamma was always left with Uncle Charles; so what was poor Mr. Bunker to do?"

"Ah! I see! I regret that my denseness blinded me to the fact that I was assuming the amusing rôle of the wall between such a Pyramus and Thisbe," I sneered, "but fortunately my efforts—that is, my obtuseness, I mean" (I corrected hastily)—"was as futile as that of the other piece of masonry."

"We had such an amusing drive to Interlachen that day!" she said, in a far-away, retrospective manner. "Mr. Bunker was very funny. He said that the



true reason you wouldn't come with us was that your washerwoman had hung your clothes on the 'line of Lucerne' and the authorities had seized them."

"His wit was evidently stimulated by the pleasures of hope. By the way, was I somewhat previous in addressing you as Mrs. Bunker? I suppose, now I come to think of it, the event may not have come off as yet."

"No; I'm not married as yet, and I've no idea when I shall be," she replied, repressing a smile. "But tell me, why didn't you join us at Interlachen? Aren't you just a little ashamed of yourself, deserting your fellow-travelers in such a sudden fashion, and never dropping a line to tell them whether you were among the quick or the dead, save a very skimpy note of stereotyped congratulations?"

"Really, Miss Wildray, I am rather under the impression that your party deserted me, and, besides, I saw no reason to suppose that the presence of third parties would be more desirable than formerly, either to the happy couple or their elderly relatives."

"Thank you very much, Mr. Smith!" she said, with a mock-offended air, though during the whole conversation her eyes had never stopped dancing, nor had a little furtive smile ceased to play about the curves of her lips. "Thank you very much, both for Uncle Charles and myself! We have enjoyed seeing the young people happy."

I stared at her blankly and she went



on in an explanatory way:

"I knew that I had reached years of discretion, but I'm not used to my new dignity of joint-chaperone with my gallant uncle. Mamma has been very obedient and discreet, though she says she is setting me an example of the model *fiancée*."

Still I stared, but even before my reasoning faculties had asserted themselves a thrill of premonitory delight tingled through me. But the uncertainty was too much! "Miss Wildray," I said, "pardon me, but is your mother's name Dora?"

"Why, yes!" she answered, looking away. "I was named after her."

The blood rushed to my head, and a strange feeling of lightness and buoyancy came over me. But we children of this age are the heirs of habits of mental repression, and we take our psychical crises with a stoicism worthy of the Spartan. So I did not rise as on wings, nor sing, nor dance, but merely stood and looked out into the drizzling murk of the approaching night, where the sea seemed to have grown black with the load which had dropped from my heart, and the wind to whistle and swoop with exultation as it blew the last remnants of unhappiness from me. I seemed a new man as I turned once more to the girl beside me. She had risen and was leaning against the rail, gazing at the white of the waves as they gleamed like tossing specters. She shivered slightly, but as she turned



and met my eyes her cheeks flamed.

"Miss Wildray," I said, "I—I'm afraid I have made a very stupid mistake all summer. I thought that letter at Lucerne meant that *you* were engaged. But I've had the reward stupidity deserves. I've passed a most wretched summer, and I was on my way home now to get into harness again and try and forget it all. I have been abjectly miserable."

"I thought misery loved companions," she said, glancing up at me.

"Then I must have been the epitome of misery from the time I joined your party, for I have loved you ever since."

"How wretched we both must have been in each other's company!" she said. \* \* \*

I never could understand how an autobiographer could throw open the shutters and let the great unconcerned world gawk through at his little romantic tableau, and as I never do things I don't understand doing, I shall not follow such an example. But other people are not so chary of their neighbor's affairs, as I discovered several days later when I overheard a portly matron relating the scene in full with embellishments to a half dozen gloating auditors in a sunny corner on deck.

"Yes, my dear; it's so! I had been feeling ill and was trying to find a retired spot on deck, when I suddenly came around the corner, and there they were! Well, I suppose they're engaged now; but how any self-respecting girl



could let any man take her in his arms and kiss her on the deck of a Cunard steamer—I don't care what the weather was—is more than I can comprehend. But, then, I don't pretend to understand the girls of this generation.

“My dear, I was so shocked, I forgot all about my seasickness and went down to the cabin at once, in spite of my illness, to tell Mrs. Wildray what sort of a person her daughter was with, and, if you'll believe me, that great red brute that she's engaged to got up from where he was sprawling on a divan and said, ‘Well, Mrs. Jones, are you going to announce this on the blackboard or take the Socratic method of informing the ship's company?’ And I haven't told a soul of it, just to show him that he was mistaken! Well! I suppose they're engaged now, so it's all right; but I hope it won't get out just how they behaved.”

Which last expresses my sentiments exactly.





# THE GHOST AT WHITE BEAR.

BY FRANKLYN W. LEE.



HE lights, yellowed by the moon's incomparable radiance, shone brightly in the lower windows of the Chateaugay and the Williams ; from Leip's, not far beyond, came the alluring strains of Waldteufel's " Les Sirènes " and the twinkle of the arc light on the lawn ; a group of merry fellows tramped along shore, singing a fragment of some rare old college song ; the broad sail of a cat-rigger flapped lazily as the boat rounded to at the landing, and the mingled strains of mandolin and guitar stole over the rippled bosom of the lake. The "transients" and cottagers at White Bear never had a more beautiful, more enjoyable night, and although the hour was late there were so many pleasures to be found afloat and ashore that but few had repaired to their couches.

During a lull in the festivities at Leip's a young man made his way through the long, broad main hall and across the so-called ordinary to the door of the dining room, where the inevitable soirée was in progress, and scanned the faces of those present. Several of his friends, passing out to the veranda for a breath of fresh air, greeted him cordially and eyed him quizzically, while the girls looked regretfully at his half-tennis, half-boating costume, for he waltzed divinely, did Leland,



when he was in the mood and could be won from his incomprehensible night rambles, which were more frequent now than ever. But he gave the revelers scant courtesy and continued his ocular search until his gaze encountered a well-made Adonis, whose dress suit fitted his athletic curves like a glove and whose eye glasses gave him a decidedly *distingué* appearance. Then the watcher's face brightened perceptibly and he whispered something to the attendant at the door, who bowed and hurried away.

"Mr. Kamaley, you are wanted at the door," said the Mercury to the Adonis, who turned, caught Leland's eye and nodded; then he sighed heavily, too, like one who feels that he has been, or is about to be, robbed of perfect bliss; but, making his excuses to the bevy of fair ones in his vicinity, he leisurely made his way to the door.

"What's up, old fellow?" he asked, noting the loiterer's serious face.

"I have seen it again."

"The deuce!" Kamaley ejaculated, surprise causing his eye glasses to fall from their aquiline elevation. "When? Where?"

"Not half an hour ago; on the peninsula."

Kamaley rubbed the glasses thoughtfully for a moment, and then uttered the monosyllabic inquiry: "Well?"

"There isn't much to tell," said Leland, thoughtfully. "This time I was not so startled and hailed it, but there was no reply—I was a fool to expect any—and



when I gave chase the thing disappeared before the keel of my boat touched the pebbles. I lingered awhile, hoping to see it again, but I was disappointed and pulled back here."

"What do you suggest?"

"That we return immediately," said the other, hurriedly. "I say 'we,' because I want you to accompany me and see for yourself, so that you will be convinced that this is no creature of my imagination, but a mysterious entity which will puzzle both of us. In short, I want to assure myself that there is no trick. Will you come?"

"Surely," Kamaley replied nonchalantly. "I shall have to get out of this harness, though, and in the meantime you can go down and tell Victor to get my boat ready."

"Everything is in readiness; hurry," said Leland, briefly, and his friend ran upstairs.

Lighting a cigar, Leland paced nervously up and down before the clerk's desk, deaf to Colonel Leip's praise of the night, his mind still seeking vainly a solution of the mystery it had encountered. Only the other evening, while pulling lazily over to the island opposite the town, the musical splash of the water, the faint ripples and the rhythm of the stroke mingling with the drift of his poetic fancy, he had been spellbound by a strange sight. From a clump of trees on shore there had emerged a slight, white-robed figure almost transparent in quality, which had floated down to the



water's edge and paused there, regarding the rower steadfastly. It was a woman, and, as he reversed his stroke and backed in, he saw that her pale, ethereal face was singularly beautiful. Then he permitted the boat to drift idly, and their eyes met ; hers with a wealth of indefinable pathos in their peculiar depths ; his, fascinated, troubled and puzzled.

Thinking her some poor creature in distress, he went to the oars again and sent his cedar flying stern foremost to the landing, but when within a dozen yards he saw the figure disappear and a tremor seized him. For several minutes he sat there inanimate, as if hypnotized, and then slowly returned to Leip's, wondering what he had seen and what it meant. To Kamaley alone had he confided the story. The latter, when told of the adventure, had laughed lightly and hinted that he had always known White Bear sherry to be of a poor quality and likely to produce peculiar effects ; but Leland was so thoroughly convinced and earnest as to brook no raillery. Now he had seen it a second time—this very night—on the peninsula, a mile or more away from the scene of the first encounter, and he was determined that his friend should behold the shape, admit the truth of the story and aid him in solving the riddle.

In a short space Kamaley, now in immaculate flannels, with a crimson sash about his generous waist and his inseparable fez on the back of his blonde head, descended to the office and, with a last lingering look at the gay scene within, fol-



lowed his friend down to the landing.

The breeze had stiffened a little during the hour and the moon hung near a bank of threatening clouds, which were occasionally revealed by faint flashes of lightning. The sail filled readily and the boat veered away from the pier, gliding smoothly and swiftly. Leland held the tiller and made for the strait between the island and the village of White Bear. The town lights were fast disappearing and the lake was almost deserted, only an occasional boat load of revelers or a pair of loving idlers being met with. Finding nothing there, after a brief wait, he swung about, heading for the peninsula, from whence there came the subdued echo of a song, but the search was no more successful than at first. Sighing a little and casting a last glance toward the village in the hope of detecting the vision on the dim shore, Leland pointed Mahtomedi, whose woody background loomed darkly beyond, and, lashing the tiller, produced a fresh cigar and smoked in moody silence until his friend spoke.

"The conditions don't appear to favor a materialization *séance* this evening, do they? Or perhaps your ethereal temptress believes in the old saying that 'two's company.'"

"I don't know," said Leland, sullenly. "I can't make it out, and the thing is getting to be such a nightmare that I don't sleep well."

"Depend upon it, old fellow, there is a trick. Some day you will find that you have been the victim of a huge joke."



"I don't think so. If it should turn out that way, however, the joker will regret it," muttered Leland, angrily.

"Pshaw! Give and take," said his friend, lightly. Then, as they neared Mahtomedi, he added: "There's nothing here, Dick. Hadn't we better come about?"

"Yes. Come and take the tiller, and I'll stand at the bow. Head her for the peninsula again. Perhaps I can discover something which would escape your eyes."

Kamaley went aft and Leland crept to the bow, where he leaned against the mast, straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of the object of their search. The moon had gone behind the clouds and darkness settled upon them, while a fine breeze sent the staunch cat-rigger bowling over the waves until the lights in the Chateaugay Assembly Hall were lost in the gloom behind. The person at the helm hummed a ditty rather impatiently, for the thought that a wild-goose chase had taken him from the pleasures of the dance was not at all comforting. Taking out his watch and bringing the dial close to the glow of his cigar he saw that it was almost midnight, and he sighed as he thought of the lucky fellows who were at that moment encircling pliant waists in the last delightful waltz. As he replaced his watch the sound of Leland's low voice was wafted back to him.

"Howard! Look!"

He peered into the night and beheld something which disturbed his habitual equipoise. Gliding before the boat, with-



in twenty feet of where Leland stood, was a half-submerged, ghostly figure, draped in ethereal clinging garments. The dim features were indistinct to Kamaley, who could only see imperfectly, but the apparition was feminine and not at all bad looking. Leland, holding to the mast, bent forward as much as he dared, fascinated by the wraith, which moved so tantalizingly at a safe distance. Once he turned to his friend and inquired, somewhat exultantly :

"Can you see? Do you doubt me now?"

"Can I doubt my own eyes?" retorted Kamaley, seeking to gain a better view. And, as they sped on in the strange chase, the spectre, like the hand of the Lady of the Lake in Tennyson's "Idylls,"

Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,  
Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,

until the full length of the slight figure was revealed to the watchers.

"Keep a sharp look out," whispered Kamaley, "or we shall run head on to the peninsula and wind up with a wreck."

"Ay, ay!" said the other in a low tone. "When I give the word luff a little, swing around and come back after me. Keep your wits about you."

"What are you going to do?" his companion demanded.

"Wait and see."

Still the figure glided before them, growing distinct and indistinct by turns. Suddenly the point of the peninsula loomed ahead in rugged outline and Leland gave



the signal.

"Now!"

Kamaley jammed the tiller over and heard a heavy splash as the boat careened. Peering under the boom he saw that his friend was no longer at the bow.

"Hanged if he hasn't jumped in after it!" he muttered, and then, making a circuit, sailed back where Leland stood hip deep in the cool water. "What luck, old man?" he shouted.

"The worst!" growled Leland, as he clambered aboard. "It seemed so near that I jumped, but the thing dissolved and left me standing there like a half-drowned fool. Let's go back to the hotel."

\* \* \* \* \*

It was a showery Sunday succeeding a Saturday night of innocent dissipation. Those who would have courted a drenching under ordinary circumstances were too tired to exert themselves, and so the coterie at Leip's loitered on the veranda, reading the latest prevarication from the gifted Haggard's pen or chatting about little or nothing. Kamaley was the centre of one of the groups of chatterboxes, and when the small talk lagged he turned to one of the fairest of his divinities and asked:

"When is your cousin coming, Miss Houghton?"

"She will arrive on Monday," said the girl, flashing a bright glance upon him; "and then we poor girls must expect cruel snubs, I suppose."



"Why, is she so ill bred?"

"I don't mean that," she retorted, with a charming pout. "Can't you understand? She is all that is lovely, and so pretty that you boys will desert us and bow with one accord before the newcomer's shrine."

"Indeed! It strikes me that you are fishing for a compliment," said Kamaley, bluntly. "What is she like?"

"You would not believe my rhapsodies," said Miss Houghton, blithely, "so I shall run upstairs and get her photograph. Luckily I have one—taken about a month ago."

She hurried away to her room and emerged therefrom with the likeness in her hand just as Leland sauntered along. She smiled brightly, for he was a general favorite, but stumbled in her haste and would have fallen had he not caught her arm.

"Allow me," he said, stooping to recover the photograph, which had slipped from her hand. As he did so, he uttered an exclamation and started back.

"Why, Mr. Leland, what on earth is the matter?"

He made no reply, but permitted his eyes to feast themselves upon the picture. Then he asked hurriedly:

"This face!—whose is it?"

"My cousin's—she will be here next week," she replied confusedly, at a loss to account for his peculiar demeanor.

"And her name is——?"

"Eleanor Winthrop."

Eleanor Winthrop! Then he had seen



no wraith, only the higher personality of a living woman ! A thrill passed over him and he felt happier than he had been in years.

"I beg your pardon," he said, restoring the disturbing bit of cardboard. "I did not mean to startle at you. I thought I recognized the face."

"Impossible, unless you have been to New Orleans," was the answer sent back to him as she made her way downstairs to the veranda.

Kamaley was awaiting her return and smiled rather satirically when she appeared.

"Well, I suppose I am expected to yield myself captive at once. But beware ; my ideas of beauty are my own and I have no respect for canons set up by other worshippers."

"At all events, I have always credited you with good taste," she retorted, archly. "This is her picture."

"What is this ? Great heaven !" he cried, as he beheld the beautiful face. Passing his hand across his eyes in order to assure himself, he looked again, and then turned to Leland, who was just emerging from the house, and exclaimed, "I say, old fellow, come here and look at this !"

"I have seen it," said Leland, quietly.

"What is this mystery ? First Mr. Leland is startled by the picture and now *you* are completely upset ! What does it all mean ?" and Miss Houghton, wholly bewildered, looked appealingly at each in turn.



"Why, you see," Kamaley began, impulsively, but Leland placed a finger upon his lips; whereupon Miss Houghton stigmatized both as being "real mean," and was disconsolate for three whole days. When Miss Winthrop came and fulfilled the highest expectations of everyone there was no solution offered, and her cousin divided her time between asking herself what had so agitated her two friends when they saw the picture, and wondering why it was that Leland and Eleanor so suddenly became the best of friends, and why the latter invariably gave him the preference over the others. Even when their engagement was announced nothing was said which would cast any light upon the subject.

One day Leland and Eleanor were out on the lake, he rowing idly and she singing a favorite air in a subdued contralto, both deeply abstracted. Suddenly he asked :

"Shall I tell you where I first saw you?"

"What need is there?" and she smiled winningly. "It was at the station when the boys and girls met me and gave me such a royal reception."

"That was the fourth time I had seen you," he said gravely, watching her closely.

"The fourth time? I don't understand! And yet, strangely enough, your face was not altogether unfamiliar to me. Let me think, let me think," she returned, knitting her brow.

"Do so and I shall aid you. The first



glimpse I had of you was when you stood upon the shore across from the island and near the bridge. All this happened a week before you came. The next time you were on the peninsula. As before, you vanished when I approached. The last time you seemed to rise from the water ahead of our boat, and as we drew near the peninsula——”

“You jumped!” she exclaimed, her face radiant and the perplexity gone from her eyes.

“Howard Kamaley has told you, then,” he muttered angrily, biting his lip, for he had reserved for himself the pleasure of telling her of the strange experiences of which she, or her double, or her astral self—whichever you please—had been the central figure, and he was nettled by the thought that his friend should have revealed the secret.

“Not at all,” she said, promptly. “I remember all now.” Then noting his bewildered look, she added, softly and earnestly: “I dreamed it—I recall everything. I was so anxious to come here that the thought took complete possession of me, until my mind could contain nothing but my plans for the summer at White Bear, and at night I came here in my dreams. The memory escaped me for the time being, and when I came and everything seemed so familiar I wondered. When I met you it was as if I had stumbled upon an old friend, but I could not tell why. Although I have put the question to myself times without number I have never been able



to solve it."

"It is fate!" said Leland, earnestly and impressively.

"What a solemn word!" she exclaimed.

"Are you sorry?"

"What man could be sorry who has been sought out by so sweet a spirit and lifted far above his fellow creatures?"

He discarded the oars and took her hands in his. As he drew her unresisting form toward him and pressed his lips to hers something dashed by them.

"Ship ahoy! Aha, I caught you!"

Looking up confusedly they beheld Kamaley's cat-rigger bowling away to leeward, and both echoed his merry laugh.





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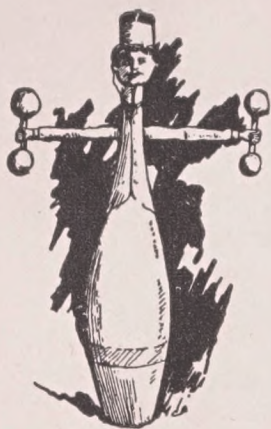
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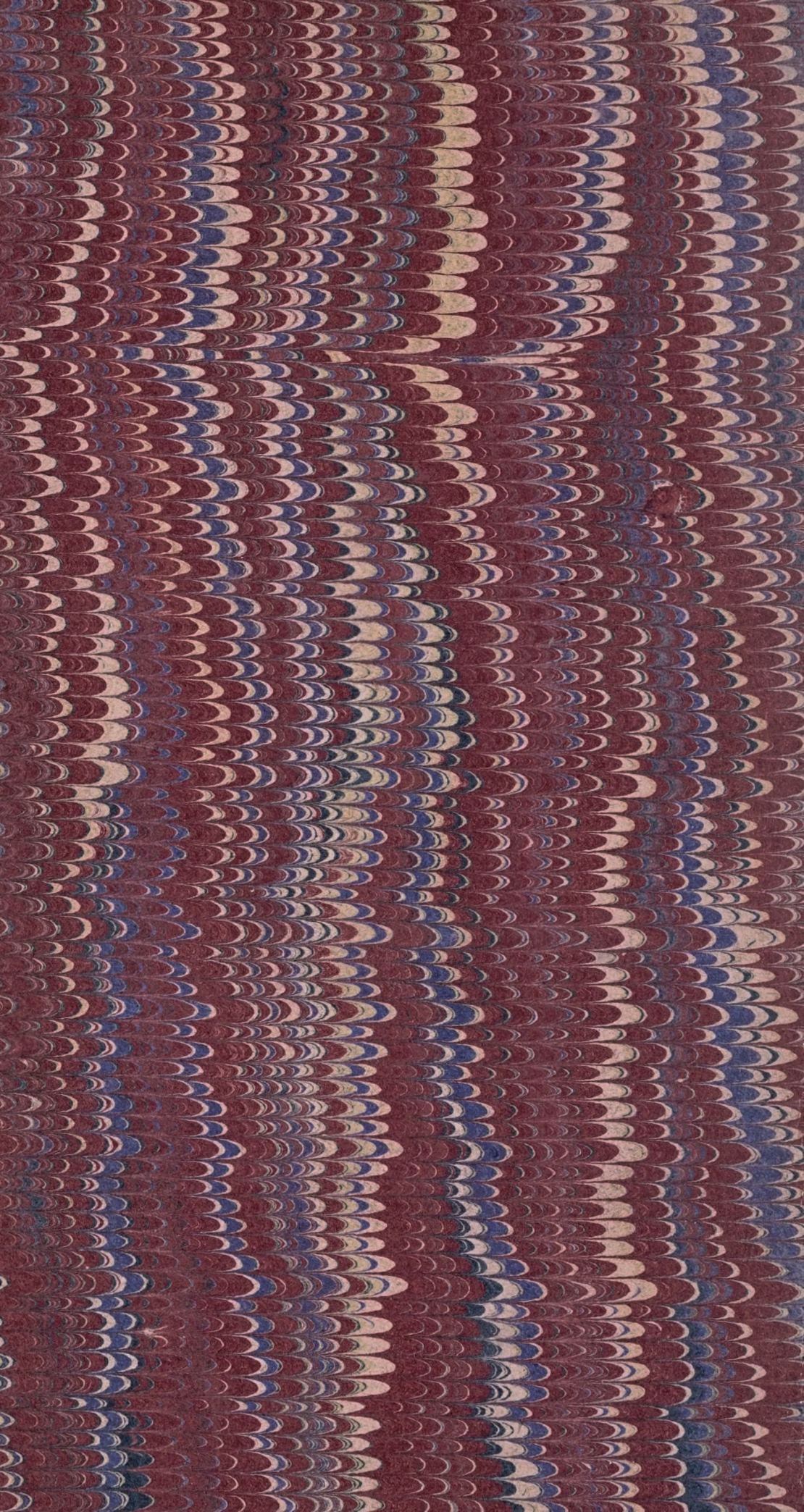




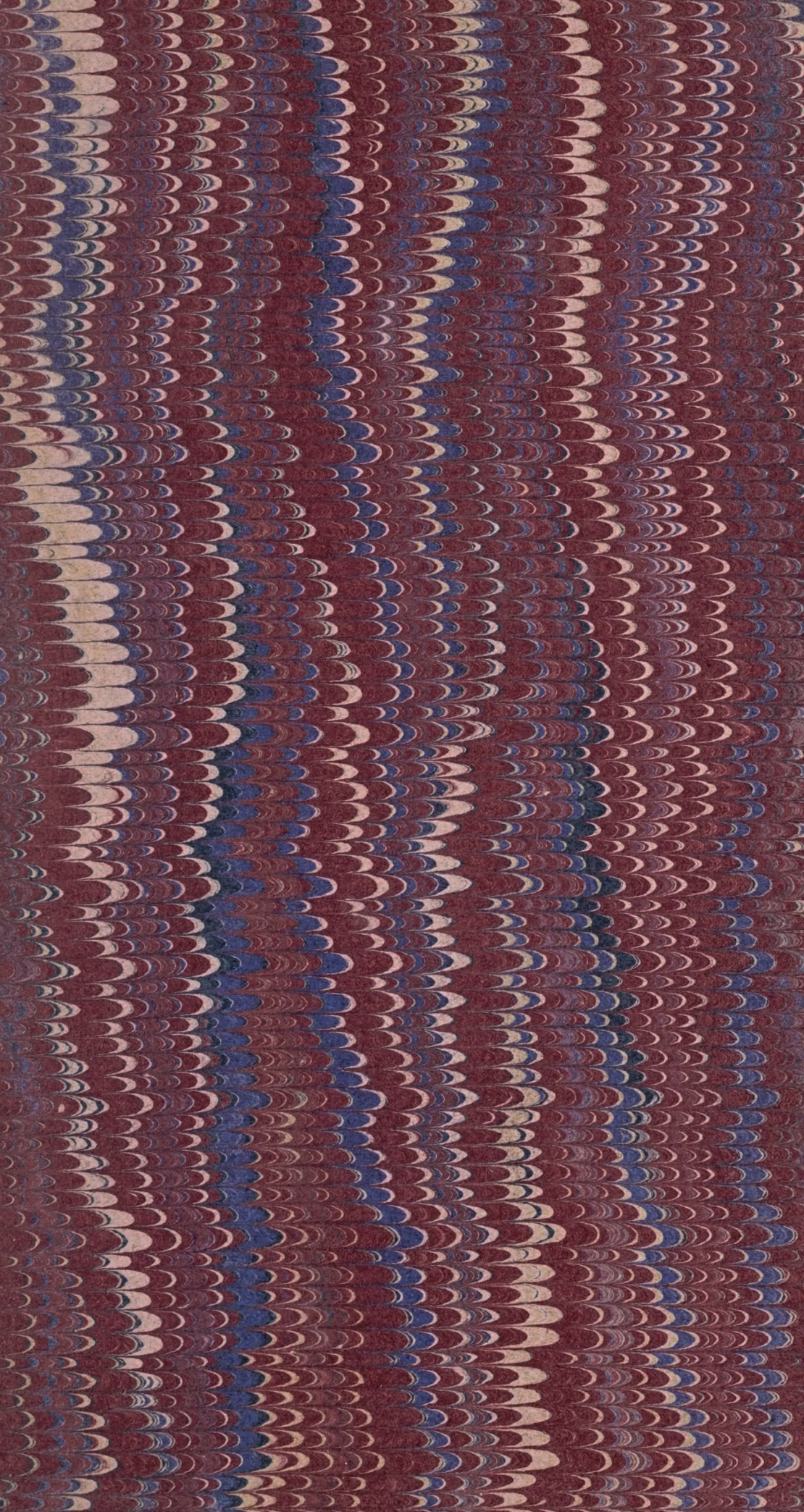














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